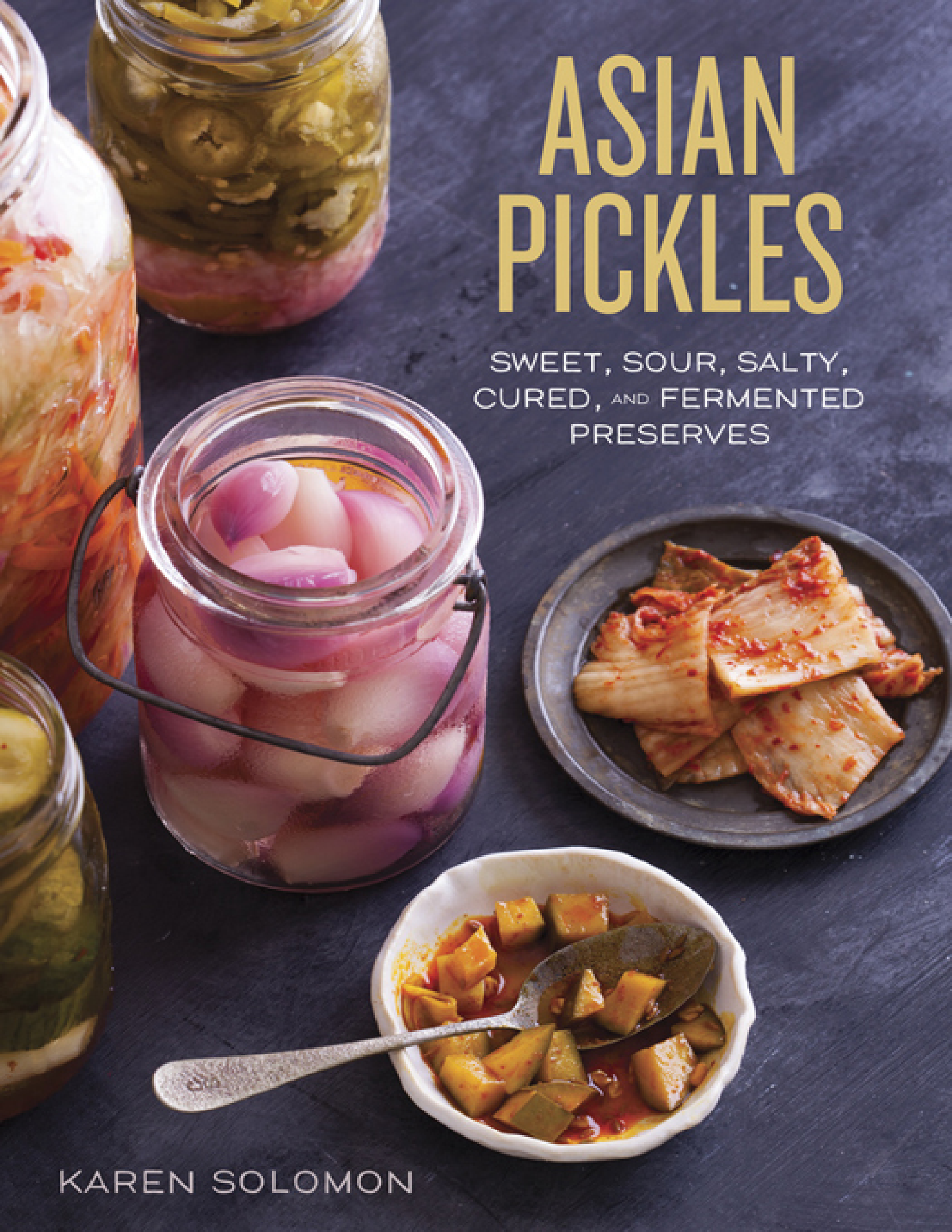
ASIAN PICKLES
SWEET, SOUR, SALTY, CURED, AND FERMENTED PRESERVES
KAREN SOLOMON

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# ASIAN PICKLES

SWEET, SOUR, SALTY,
CURED, AND FERMENTED
PRESERVES FROM JAPAN,
KOREA, CHINA, INDIA,
AND BEYOND

photography by
JENNIFER MARTINÉ

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moment in the spotlight for answering all of my silly questions. Amanda from Duc Loi market, also in San Francisco, makes the best bahn mi I've ever had. Not only is she the nicest lady with the coolest life story, but also her pickle knowledge (and her kimchi) are off the charts. Thanks for the show and tell.

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Thanks to YOU, my pickle-chomping audience, for your adventurous palate and briny lust. Let's DO this!

Sweet Mango
eat on 4-
Pickled
w/Lime
Chunky

# INTRODUCTION

MY DEAR FELLOW PICKLING AFICIONADOS, given the choice of any global cuisine for nearly any meal of the day, my tastes and preferences will always point East. My meals include stir-fries, broths zupped up by preserved lemon or ginger, noodles of every imaginable type, savory pancakes, rice porridge, and, of course, several bowls of good ol' Nishiki or jasmine steamed rice. My favorite brunch item ever is served at Namu Gaji in San Francisco: two sous vide eggs bobbing in an outstanding bowl of homemade dashi, served alongside rice, fried oysters, and house-made kimchi. That soothing, salty, full-flavored and fermented feast is what I crave.

Despite the fact that my first two cookbooks are always shelved with the jam making and canning books, I am a fan of kitchen tinkering of all stripes. I live for drying, salting, curing, marinating, and brining. I am simply fascinated by the meditative practice of taking a foodstuff and transforming it with little more than salt or sugar, heat or moisture, time and magical bacteria.

Enter the humble pickle. Although I love all of my kitchen creations the way a mother hen loves her flock, pickles have truly captured my heart (and my stomach!). I swear, I could live on little more than hot rice and cold pickles, provided they are crisp, flavorful, pungent, and bright. It is only natural that, with so many Asian flavors spilling from my dinner bowl plus so many years of traveling to Asia and living there for a spell, my interest would turn to pickles of the Asian continent. Although many of these pickles have clear and immediate appeal—after all, who doesn't love fresh vegetables dunked in a bath of vinegar and sugar?—it is the ones that have the most challenging flavors that I find the most pleasurable and rewarding. (I'm looking at *you*, pickled squid, nukazuke, and achar!) Naturally, after tinkering in my own kitchen trying my hand at pickling in rice bran, soy sauce, citrus

juices, and fish sauce, I set out to buy a cookbook that could teach me deeply about Asian pickles. While I found a few great books on pickles of individual countries, I did not find the pan-Asian pickling experience in recipe form, equipped with descriptions of ingredients and unfamiliar techniques, that I had a yen for. It was clear that I was going to have to write it instead.

So how did I set about on this global task? By stuffing my brain and my mouth full of every flavor of each country represented as much as possible. I set out on an epic research project: relying not just on personal experience from my own travels, but also other cookbooks, countless blogs, San Francisco's manifold authentic eateries and supermarkets, and friends, friend's mothers, and grandmothers. I also pestered chefs and as many people working in the trenches as I could—literally strangers who were experts at the craft and working behind deli cases, ringing cash registers, and waiting tables—to share their techniques, ingredients, and tips. And, of course, as any cookbook author will tell you, there is also nothing that can replace good ol' trial and error. The kitchen-as-laboratory is always the best place to learn hands on (and fail a lot! *Yes*!).

There were a few ground rules that I've put into place as I set out to write for a (primarily) North American audience. It is my rule of thumb to always provide DIY alternatives to special equipment. Believe me, I would not ask you to buy a single extra piece of kitchen gear that was not absolutely necessary. I am a big evangelist for the idea that you should be free and able to make pickles—particularly Asian pickles—with all of the pots and pans that are already in your cupboard.

This same idea holds true for ingredients. I solemnly swear never to ask you to track down difficult-to-source ingredients unless they will truly make or break a dish. And if there is a suitable substitute, I always make a note of it in the recipe. I've also tried, whenever possible, to ensure that there is a place to purchase obscure items online; if not, I haven't included it in the recipes here, no matter how authentic it may be. (I've included those helpful URLs when applicable.) Authenticity is nothing if a pickle's components aren't accessible.

The other utilitarian aspect to all of this pickle passion is that I have included many ideas for how to use your pickles in daily cooking. What good is a fridge full of jars that never get opened? After all, the whole idea of pickles is that you have preserved food standing by to craft a fast, delicious,

and (most often) healthy meal. While some of these recipes produce fiercely sour, spicy, or sweet morsels designed to be dainty little palate cleansers to complement a main dish, others bask in the spotlight when tossed with meat, seafood, or tofu in a wok or bubbled into a broth with noodles. Plenty of others make for a vegetable side dish that's ready to serve by the large bowlful, or a meaningful sandwich accessory. I also include a recipe for congee (also commonly called jook), a satisfying rice porridge that's the pickle's best backdrop for a satisfying meal.

Some other notes before moving forward: You like canning, right? So do I. But you will notice that most of these recipes are not designed for long-term shelf storage. (Warning: Your refrigerator shelf may get crowded.) Fans of both fermented and brined pickles will not be disappointed; there are plenty of both represented here as is the custom of the Asian continent. One thing for certain: you will not be bored. There are many techniques and ingredients within that are likely new to you, and pickling beds and substrates that are, in large part, new frontiers for the Western fan of kosher dills and bread-and-butter pickles.

If I've done my job correctly, you will become as enchanted with Asian pickles as I am. And your refrigerator will soon be busting at the seams with a crisp, colorful, and invigorating pickle feast.

Happy pickling!

## WHY YOU SHOULD RUN OUT RIGHT NOW AND BUY A KITCHEN SCALE

Don't have a kitchen scale? Go buy one. These days, a good one that's small enough to fit in a kitchen drawer is about $30. You'll find you will use it for much more than just weighing out vegetables and pressure weights for tsukemono: measuring ingredients for baking and making jam, estimating postage, and weighing your pet hamster. (Come on. You know you want to.)

# JAPAN

WHEN AND HOW TO SERVE TSUKEMONO
BASICS OF JAPANESE PICKLING

## TRADITIONAL TSUKEMONO

MISO PICKLES (MISOZUKE)
KOJI RICE PICKLES (KOJIZUKE)
RICE BRAN PICKLES (NUKAZUKE)
PICKLED PLUMS AND PICKLED PLUM “VINEGAR” (UMEBOSHI AND UMEZU)
PICKLED GINGER (GARI)
RED PICKLED GINGER (BENI SHOGA)
PRESERVED SEAWEED (KOMBU NO TSUKUDANI)
“THOUSAND SLICES” TURNIPS (SENMAIZUKE)
PICKLED MUSTARD GREENS (TAKANAZUKE)

## INSPIRED PICKLES

“SITTING FEE” CABBAGE PICKLE
MIXED GINGER AND SHISO PICKLE
PICKLED SHISO LEAVES AND SHISO VINEGAR
PICKLED ASIAN PEAR WITH LEMON
CUCUMBER ARAME PICKLES
PUCKERY EGGPLANT IN MUSTARD PICKLES
“WASABI” PICKLED CARROTS

JAPANESE PICKLES ROCK. Many of the flavors are quite familiar to those of us who regularly rally around sushi, ramen, and donburi—soy sauce, ginger, the sweet quality of mirin cooking wine—and these ingredients are regularly used in making many Japanese pickles. When I lived in Japan in the 1990s, I bought and gobbled pickles voraciously, and when a meal came to

my table with that special little dish of colorful cut-up morsels, I was a happy woman.

So if you have grown bored of the classic bread-and-butter pickles and dilly green beans, I am pleased to pull back the curtain on a plethora of new pickling possibilities. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of varieties of tsukemono (the Japanese word for pickled foods), many of which vary from region to region, or from home to home.

In no way is this a definitive guide—think of it more as a mix tape of a selection of my favorites: some my own kitchen creations, some classic, and all delicious and not overly labor-intensive. And unlike most tsukemono you'll see on the grocery store shelf, these are all completely devoid of preservatives, artificial colors and flavorings, and other gunky stuff.

These recipes cover a lot of terrain. The first group of recipes are entirely traditional; the second batch are my pickled twists inspired by Japanese flavors and ingredients. Many can be crafted from ingredients found in any large grocery store; just a few will require a trip to a Japanese market. Some take weeks or months before you can taste your finished pickles; others are chopstick-ready in minutes. So if you're unable to hop the next jetliner or tramp steamer to Japan, you have many routes to transport yourself to the land of Japanese pickles.

Some of the flavors that are going to hit your tongue here are familiar, like the sweet, sharp, cleansing taste of gari, or pickled ginger. But a lot also hail from what may be uncharted territory: the earthen, musky, meaty flavor of rice bran pickles, or the sweet and pleasantly swampy vegetables that emerge from an amazake cure. I hope that you dig the experience of exploring new and possibly challenging techniques and flavors as much as I do.

## WHEN AND HOW TO SERVE TSUKEMONO

I'm of the philosophy that pickles pair best with my mouth almost anytime, usually while I'm standing in front of the open refrigerator. But if you must

be a stickler, know that Japanese pickles are traditionally served on any number of occasions, including as part of breakfast or any light meal, with rice and soup; at the end of a meal, as they are believed to aid in digestion; or as happy hour snacks with sake, beer, or whiskey. Some dishes, like curries or fried pork, always have a pickled component served on the side of the plate (see Red Pickled Ginger). And I have heard of many people who jump-start the day with a tart and puckery umeboshi (pickled plum)—take that, coffee! In short, even traditionalists pretty much come around to the same conclusion as I do: there is never a bad moment to become one with a pickle.

On a well-laid Japanese table, pickles are presented quite artfully, with a lot of thought given to offering a variety of flavors, textures, and colors (which would explain why so many store-bought Japanese pickles come off the shelf in Kool-Aid shades of purple, pink, and yellow). Different styles of pickles are often combined; for example, pickles flavored variously with soy sauce, vinegar, and rice bran or miso will share a plate. It is common to see three or more varieties of pickles chopped into tiny, bite-size pieces and arranged side by side in a single small dish. This, my friend, is the pickle as art.

## BASICS OF JAPANESE PICKLING

While some picklers geek out on *what* gets pickled (insert your "We can pickle that!" *Portlandia* riff here), I find I'm more interested in *how*—in working with new pickling techniques and beds (see Pickling Beds below). If you share my brand of geekitude, then nothing can compare with Japanese pickles. Just a few pickling principles rule the tsukemono school.

- **PICKLING BEDS.** Like the organic farmer who says her main crop is the soil and vegetables are an added bonus, I profess the importance of the pickling bed—a medium that is reused repeatedly (even indefinitely) and that is the foundation of a number of Japanese pickles. Vegetables or other ingredients cure in the medium for minutes, hours, days, months, or years (!), depending on the style of pickle and the flavor you're going for. When

the pickles are removed, the bed is kept for reuse. Crafting the bed and keeping it pickle-ready is a job unto itself. Bedbound pickles in this book include Rice Bran Pickles, Koji Rice Pickles, and Miso Pickles.

- **PRESSURE.** Another hallmark of tsukemono craft is the use of pressure. Ingredients to be pickled are salted, put in a container, and covered with a weighted drop lid that does not touch the edges of the container. The vegetables are slowly and gently compressed as they release their liquid and the lid lowers along with them, giving them a crunchy texture. (The resulting liquid is usually discarded, but some like to use it as a flavored, salty component in marinades.)

- **SQUEEZING.** This is another means of transformation for vegetables in Japanese pickling. The ingredients are first tossed with salt or some kind of salty medium (like soy sauce) to help draw out their water, then left to rest for a bit, and later squeezed vigorously by hand. Squeezing is often used in conjunction with the pressure from a drop lid. In the recipes in this book that call for squeezing (Pickled Mustard Greens, or "Sitting Fee" Cabbage Pickle, for example), it is important to really make your vegetables rain. Do not gently massage. Do not be a wimp. *Squeeze* without mercy. Added bonus: Salty water makes your hands really soft. (Antibonus: It also irritates tiny cuts and hangnails. Ouch!)

- **MARINADE/VINEGAR.** While the above techniques tend to be paramount to tsukemono and other Asian pickles, some also take on their flavor the way your grandma's did: via vinegar brine or some kind of marinade infused with other flavors. Some pickles require time to develop flavors in the bath, whereas others are ready to eat after a quick toss in a vibrant sauce.

**TRADITIONAL TSUKEMONO**

# MISO PICKLES

## (MISOZUKE)

Mizozuke are a very old-school Japanese standard with a crisp texture and a salty, sweet, and pleasingly cozy flavor. This is a go-anywhere pickle, and it is at home with rice or grilled meats. It's also a great foray into the world of pickling beds, since the pickling bed (the miso-doko) comes together in under a minute, and the immersion time can be quick. For most vegetables I prefer about 30 minutes, but I've also used firm tofu and left it in for a month, with delicious results that were more like spreadable aged cheese than tofu. I call for red miso because it's my favorite, but feel free to try a mellower white or yellow miso instead.

---

• TIME: 40 MINUTES TO 1 DAY • MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP OF PICKLING BED, ENOUGH FOR 10 TO 20 BATCHES OF PICKLES •

---

⅔ cup red miso

1 clove garlic, minced

2 tablespoons mirin

2 tablespoons sake or dry sherry

1 teaspoon kosher salt (optional)

Combine the miso, garlic, mirin, and sake in a small bowl to form a thick paste.

To make miso pickles, clean, peel, and slice vegetables ¼- to ⅓-inch thick. Watery vegetables, like cucumbers and daikon, should first be lightly tossed with the salt and left to drain their excess moisture for an hour; less watery vegetables like carrots and broccoli don't necessitate this step. Rinse and pat completely dry before continuing.

Submerge the vegetables in the paste; don't use more vegetables than can be covered in a thick layer of the paste. Let sit at room temperature for 30 minutes to 24 hours. Wipe off or rinse off the miso mixture before eating.

The miso-doko (that is, the pickling bed) will keep for several days on the countertop (this is handy if you're pickling frequently). To add to its longevity, refrigerate the miso-doko between uses. Depending on the water content of the vegetables you're curing, one miso bed can be reused upward of ten times. If you're still enjoying the flavor, continue to reuse it. If it gets too watery to adhere well to the vegetables, drain off the excess liquid. Old pickling beds will eventually lose their salty and sweet flavor, but they can still be used as marinades or soup bases.

**NOTE** *For easier cleanup that will help preserve your miso pickling bed, spread half of the miso mixture in a small square container and cover with a layer of thin cotton cloth (like muslin or a square cut out of an old kitchen towel; cheesecloth is too porous unless triple-layered). Spread the cut vegetables in a single layer, and then cover with another layer of cloth and spread the remaining miso mixture on top. Once the vegetables are cured to your liking, simply lift off the top layer of fabric and remove the vegetables—no rinsing required. Store the fabric with the pickling bed in the refrigerator between uses.*

## A WORD ON CANNING

Don't do it. For the most part, tsukemono aren't acidic enough to withstand shelf storage via hot water bath canning, and pressure canning would destroy their crisp

texture. The only recipe in this chapter that could possibly be canned (though it’s really not necessary) is Pickled Asian Pear with Lemon.

Koji Rice Pickles

# KOJI RICE PICKLES

## (KOJIZUKE)

Koji rice is a wonderful thing, and Japanese food would not be the same without it. Sake, miso, soy sauce—they all owe their existence to the hardest-working fungus in the food business, *Aspergillus oryzae*. Know what else koji can make? Did you say "pickles"? "Ping-pong!" as folks would say in Japan. You've guessed correctly! This pickle is another one that uses a pickling bed, which lurks in your fridge, fermenting engines revved and ready to make quick pickles when you are. In this case, the bed—which is called amazake—is spooned over the vegetable you'd like to cure. It is also a beverage and an excellent marinade for fish.

---

• TIME: 2 TO 3 WEEKS • MAKES ABOUT 6 CUPS OF FERMENTED RICE BED, ENOUGH FOR MANY BATCHES OF PICKLES •

---

5 cups water

2 cups short-grained Japanese rice

1¼ cups koji rice

¾ cup kosher salt

Bring the water to a boil in a well-insulated pot with a tight lid (bust out the cast iron if you have it). While you're waiting, rinse the short-grained rice well in a fine-mesh sieve under running water. Add the cleaned rice to the boiling water and stir. Cover, turn the heat to low, and let cook, stirring often, until the rice is quite soft and mushy and all of the liquid is absorbed, 25 to 30 minutes. Note that this rice will be much more porridgy than regular cooked rice.

Take the lid off of the pot and remove the pot from the heat. Stirring frequently, and using a kitchen thermometer for accuracy, let the rice cool to 140°F (a small fan or blow-dryer on its cool setting can help speed the process), then add the koji rice. Stir well to combine. Cover and keep it toasty warm for 24 hours; I wrap mine in a blanket and keep it over a heating pad on low.

After 24 hours, inspect your amazake. It might not smell so nice, and it will look like thick gruel. Stir in the salt, and transfer the mixture to a very clean pickling crock, glass jar(s), or food-safe plastic container(s) that can hold about 6 cups (3 pints). Cover it loosely with a lid not screwed into place to let in air but keep out insects and debris. Allow the amazake to ferment at room temperature for 2 to 3 weeks. When ready, it will have a consistency similar to cottage cheese and its smell will have become sweet and quite pleasant. Once it has reached the flavor and sweetness you like, store it in the refrigerator; it will keep for several months.

To make amazake pickles, clean, peel, and slice vegetables ⅛ to ¼ inch thick. For watery vegetables, like celery and radishes, rub them with salt and let them sit for 30 to 60 minutes to draw out some of their moisture; less watery vegetables like carrots don’t necessitate this step. Rinse and pat dry, and lay them in a shallow dish. Then, coat them completely on every surface with a thick layer of amazake. Let them sit at room temperature for 30 minutes to 24 hours. Serve immediately in the amazake (don’t rinse them!); refrigerate any unused pickles for up to 3 days.

# RICE BRAN PICKLES

## (NUKAZUKE)

I love my nuka-doko (the bed used to make nukazuke) for the magically meaty and earthy pickles it can provide. But this slowly fermented bed can seem like a pet as much as a foodstuff. It needs attention every day—both a thorough stirring from bottom to top and an assessment of its moisture content, its flavor, and its temperature. In Japan, nuka-doko may live in a wooden barrel under the floorboards, but any nonreactive kitchen container of sufficient size (at least 1 gallon) in a cool, dark place will work just as well. If you are lucky enough to find fresh nuka, use it in combination with dried for great flavor and ease of care.

• TIME: 2 TO 6 WEEKS • MAKES ABOUT 8 CUPS OF PICKLING BED, SUITABLE FOR NUMEROUS BATCHES OF PICKLES •

2 pounds dry rice bran

1 cup kosher salt

1 tablespoon yellow mustard powder

½ ounce kombu, broken up or cut into small pieces

6 cloves garlic, thinly sliced

1 (½-inch) piece fresh ginger, minced

10 small dried red chile peppers

About 6½ cups water

In a 1- to 2-gallon vessel made of ceramic, glass, or food-grade plastic, combine the rice bran, salt, mustard, kombu, garlic, ginger, and chiles. Add the water in 3 batches, mixing it into the other ingredients with your hands as you go. Stop adding water when the mixture has the texture of wet beach sand suitable for sand castles—damp and clumping, but not pooling water. Cover the nuka-doko loosely with a lid not screwed into place to let in air but keep out insects and debris. Allow it to sit at cool room temperature in a dark place for 2 to 6 weeks as you prime it.

Prime your pickling bed by immersing at least ½ cup of vegetable scraps into the bed and covering them completely; if the scraps are small, you can tie them up in cheesecloth for easier removal. The next day, remove the scraps and scrape as much of the rice bran as you can back into the bucket before discarding the vegetables. (You could eat these priming vegetables, but they won't have a great flavor.) For at least 2 weeks, but preferably 6, immerse and discard new vegetables daily and stir the bed thoroughly from top to bottom to aerate it, using either your hands or a sturdy utensil, then pat down the pickling bed into a smooth surface and wipe down the sides of the container.

After about 6 weeks, your pickling bed should have fermented nicely and taken on a pleasant earthy smell; it is now ready to use. Wash, dry, and peel the vegetables to be pickled and completely immerse them without crowding —whole, peeled carrots or turnips, or large chunks of daikon split lengthwise, are a great place to start. For watery vegetables like cucumbers or celery, trim, peel, rub with salt, and let sit for about an hour to extract water, then rinse and pat dry before immersing in the nuka-doko. Let the vegetables sit for 8 to 24 hours to take in the flavor of the bed. Remove the vegetables, keeping as much of the bed as possible in the container. Rinse off any pickling bed that's clinging to the vegetables, pat dry, and cut into small pieces to serve.

**NOTES** *If you have access to an existing batch of nuka-doko, add ½ cup or so to your bed to help jump-start its fermentation.*

*If you make sure your nuka-doko maintains the right level of moisture and stays at cool room temperature, this bed can be used almost indefinitely. It's important to stir it daily, aerating from bottom to top. Drain excess liquid that*

*builds up, and add extra nuka and flavorings as needed to keep the bed fresh. If you can't stir the nuka daily, give a thorough stir, cover tightly with a lid or plastic wrap, and store in the refrigerator until you're ready to return to daily maintenance.*

*If you stop stirring, or if the weather turns quite warm, or if your nuka-doko gets too wet, the contents may grow moldy or take on a funky, sour smell. If your nuka-doko develops a green-blue or pinkish-red mold, discard the bed immediately and start anew. If it has a funky, sour smell, you can try to revive the bed. Pour the contents into clean container and scrub the original bucket with very hot soapy water. To the nuka-doko, add ¼ cup more mustard powder, 1½ cups (3 ounces) of new dry rice bran, and another ⅓ cup of kosher salt. Mix it in completely and let the mixture dry out, uncovered, in the refrigerator or in warm sunlight, loosely covered, for 24 to 48 hours, stirring it very well top to bottom three or four times a day.*

*Pickled Plums and Pickled Plum "Vinegar"*

# PICKLED PLUMS AND PICKLED PLUM “VINEGAR”

## (UMEBOSHI AND UMEZU)

If I had to pick one pickle that best represents all of tsukemono, this one, said to be among the oldest, would certainly be it. How can I begin to describe my love for umeboshi? Their flavor is truly like nothing else on earth—tart, puckery, salty—and when I have them, I eat them every day. They just make me feel good, and I swear that nothing is more effective for an upset stomach. I apologize in advance for asking you to find such an obscure ingredient as ume or mature but unripened apricots. If you can find them, though, you should absolutely make this.

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• TIME: 3 TO 7 WEEKS • MAKES ABOUT 6 CUPS OF UMEBOSHI AND 3 CUPS OF UMEZU •

---

2½ pounds ume or mature but unripened apricots, washed

1 cup kosher salt

15 to 20 red shiso leaves, either fresh or preserved in salt (optional)

Place the plums in a 1- to 2-gallon vessel made of ceramic, glass, or food-grade plastic and cover them with water by 2 inches. Cover with a weighted plate or a plastic bag filled with water to keep them submerged. Let them soak 8 hours or overnight.

Drain the plums and return to the container, sprinkle with half of the salt, and toss to combine. Sprinkle the remaining salt evenly over the tops of the

plums. Cover the plums with a drop lid—a pot lid, plate, or plastic container lid the right size to fit inside the pickling vessel without touching the sides. Place 2½ pounds of weight (cans, rocks, or whatever is suitable and handy) on top of the drop lid. Cover the top of the container loosely with a clean cloth to let air flow in but keep out insects and debris. Store at cool room temperature in a dark place.

Check the plums after 2 days. Liquid will have started to form in the bottom; this is umezu (plum "vinegar"), a very desirable substance for seasoning, pickling vegetables, and marinating. Leave it where it is for now—the ume need this precious liquid. Stir the plums every couple of days for 2 to 3 weeks, replacing the drop lid and weights each time, until they are completely covered in liquid. If tiny spots of mold form on the surface, remove them with a clean finger or a paper towel and discard.

If you're using the shiso (which will color the plums and lend them its flavor), lay the cleaned shiso leaves evenly over the top of the plums to cover completely, then press down firmly. Either way, replace the lid and weights and leave in the cool and the dark for a couple more days.

Once the plums are covered completely in their own brine, remove the drop lid and the weight and cover the plums loosely with a lid or kitchen towel, allowing for some airflow. Return the vessel to its cool, dark place and allow the plums to continue to brine for an additional 1 to 4 weeks, tasting once a week, until they have reached the level of puckery tartness that you desire.

When the umeboshi are fermented to your satisfaction, drain and reserve the umezu and store it in a pouring bottle at room temperature. Use anywhere you'd normally use vinegar (being mindful that additional salt won't usually be necessary) or soy sauce. The umezu will last almost indefinitely. If you like, you can add more red shiso to the umezu to enhance its color and flavor.

Spoon the plums and the shiso leaves into clean jars with secure lids; cover and refrigerate. Share with your friends. Kept refrigerated, these plums will keep for at least a year—until the next ume crop!

**NOTE** *Mashed up with sugar and seltzer water in the bottom of a tall, icy glass, umeboshi make a wicked "lemonade."*

# PICKLED GINGER

## (GARI)

This is the ubiquitous Japanese pickle served beside your sashimi and wasabi wad at your local sushi joint. Sliced thin, this piquant pickle has almost as much sweetness as fire. When you make it at home, the color won't be the same as the store-bought stuff (not quite so pink), but it's equally delicious. Use it alongside homemade sushi or in the ginger and shiso pickle, or splash a little of the juice into cocktails. Look for young, thin-skinned fresh ginger.

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• TIME: 1 TO 4 WEEKS • MAKES ABOUT 1¼ CUPS •

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6 ounces fresh ginger

¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon sugar

1 tablespoon kosher salt

6 tablespoons unseasoned rice vinegar

Peel the ginger (scrape it with a spoon instead of a vegetable peeler—it works better). Slice it crosswise on the thinnest possible setting on a mandoline or in a food processor if you have a slicing blade that will slice things paper-thin, or try shaving it on the large slots on the side of a box grater. The ginger should be thin enough to nearly see through.

Toss the ginger with the 1 tablespoon of sugar and the salt and let it sit for 30 minutes. About 10 minutes before the ginger's rest time is through, bring a small, nonreactive saucepan of water to a boil and ready a fine-mesh sieve.

After the 30 minutes, toss the coated ginger into the boiling water and stir for 45 seconds. Drain immediately and transfer the hot ginger to a 10-ounce (or larger) jar.

Combine the ¼ cup of sugar and the vinegar in the saucepan and bring to a boil. Pour the boiling brine over the ginger and press down on the ginger to ensure it is completely submerged. Cover the jar and let the ginger sit at room temperature for 24 hours before moving it to the fridge. You can eat the gari after 1 week, but it will mellow and be at its best after a month. Kept covered and refrigerated, this pickle will keep for at least 6 months.

# RED PICKLED GINGER

## (BENI SHOGA)

This is not tangy-sweet, pink gari (as made in this recipe), the sushi roll's faithful companion. It's a different way to preserve fresh ginger and to vamp it up with the powerful color and flavor of red umezu. On the Japanese table, a little pinch of this pickle is ubiquitous alongside stir-fried noodles, fried pork, or hearty beef and onion stews atop rice—in short, any heavy food that needs a little brightening and lightening from a pungent, presenceful pickle. A little goes a long way: this small jar is a mighty flavor giant that will last nearly indefinitely.

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• TIME: ABOUT 1 WEEK • MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP •

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1 pound fresh ginger

¼ cup sugar

2 tablespoons kosher salt

½ to ¾ cup red umezu, homemade or store-bought

Peel the ginger (use the edge of a spoon—it's much easier) and chop it coarsely into 1-inch chunks. Working in batches, put the ginger in a food processor fitted with the metal blade (filling no more than halfway) and pulse until it's about the size of lentils. Transfer the ginger to a large nonreactive bowl. Add the sugar and salt and mix thoroughly to combine, then cover with a drop lid, and weight with a 1-pound weight. Allow the ginger to sit at least 4 hours (leaving it overnight is fine).

Preheat the oven to 200°F.

Drain the liquid from the ginger (there should be a good amount) and squeeze the ginger very firmly to get out as much liquid as possible. (Feel free to save this juice to use as a flavoring agent in other foods, or as a drink with more sugar and sparkling water.)

Transfer the ginger to a nonstick baking sheet or baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Spread it in a single layer and place in the oven; prop the door slightly open with a wooden spoon left in the door. Allow the ginger to dry for 2 to 3 hours, stirring every hour, until it's dry to the touch.

Pack the ginger into a ½-pint jar and pour enough umezu over it to cover it completely. Cover, and allow it to sit on the countertop for about 3 hours, then top off with more umezu as necessary to keep the liquid level above the ginger. Let the ginger sit, covered, at room temperature for 24 hours, then move it to the refrigerator. The pickled ginger will be ready to eat in about a week, and, kept refrigerated with a tight lid, it will keep for at least a year.

# PRESERVED SEAWEED

## (KOMBU NO TSUKUDANI)

Technically, this is not tsukemono but tsukudani, another family of Japanese preserved food—usually seaweed or seafood that has been simmered in a generous amount of soy sauce and sweetener (either sugar or mirin, or both). High salt and sugar content makes for long-lasting food, and when refrigerated, this will keep for a very, very long while. Enjoy it on top of rice or in a bento, either as is, or topped with chile flakes, toasted white sesame seeds, a drizzle of sesame oil, or minced fresh shiso leaf. Brown sugar is not traditional, but I prefer it to white here because of its added flavor depth.

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• TIME: ABOUT 2½ HOURS • MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP •

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3 ounces kombu

½ cup Japanese soy sauce

6 tablespoons mirin

6 tablespoons brown sugar

¼ cup unseasoned rice vinegar

Juice of ½ lemon

Using kitchen shears, cut the kombu into 2 by 1½-inch squares. Cover with water by 2 inches and let soak for 1 hour.

Drain the kombu, reserving ¾ cup of the soaking liquid. It's okay if the surface of the kombu has a slimy, viscous texture—there's no need to rinse it away. In a heavy-bottomed nonreactive pot, combine the kombu, soy sauce,

mirin, sugar, vinegar, and soaking liquid, and stir. Make sure the kombu is submerged in the liquid. Cover, place over high heat, and bring to a boil. Lower the heat to medium-low and simmer, covered, for 15 minutes, stirring twice.

Remove the lid and adjust the heat so the liquid maintains a low simmer; you want some persistent bubbles, but no foam. Simmer for about 1 hour, stirring often, and as the liquid reduces, lower the heat to keep it from splattering.

The liquid will thicken to a syrup that streaks across the bottom of the pot, disappearing nearly entirely. As it nears this point, stir more frequently to prevent scorching, and add the lemon juice. Taste the kombu. It should be very tender; if it's not, stir in another ¼ cup of water, cover, and cook on low heat for 10 minutes before removing the lid and letting the liquid reduce until dry once again.

At this point, your pickled kombu is ready to eat. It can be stored, covered, in the refrigerator, for at least a year.

**NOTE** *If you make your own dashi (a soup of bonito fish flakes and kombu), you can freeze the discarded solids and, when you have enough, use them in this recipe instead of the kombu (skipping the part about presoaking the seaweed).*

*“Thousand Slices” Turnips*

# “THOUSAND SLICES” TURNIPS

## (SENMAIZUKE)

Tokyo turnips? Small. Kyoto turnips? Gargantuan. This pickle is the pride of Kyoto, as it’s customarily made from the massive orbs found in the region. That said, you needn’t pack your passport to make this; just go with the largest turnips you can find. If the skin is tough or bitter, peel it off. Note that the turnips will be sliced very thin, so a mandoline or some serious knife skills are necessary for this recipe. The pickle’s crisp texture, ghostly beauty, and tangy, light sweetness will repay the time investment a thousandfold.

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• TIME: ABOUT 4 HOURS • MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS •

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¼ ounce kombu

12 to 14 ounces turnip, peeled if the skin is bitter or tough

2 teaspoons kosher salt

2 tablespoons sugar

3 tablespoons unseasoned rice vinegar

1 tablespoon mirin

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

Cover the kombu with water by 2 inches and let soak for 1 hour. Using a mandoline, slice the turnip very, very thinly—no more than ⅛ inch. Toss with half of the salt in a wide shallow dish or pie plate, smooth the slices flat, then sprinkle the remaining salt evenly over the top. Cover with a drop lid and a 14-ounce weight for 2 hours.

Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, stir together the sugar, vinegar, mirin, and lemon juice to make a brine. Once the kombu is pliable (don't worry, it will tenderize more later), drain it and pat it dry. Chop it into 2-inch-long slivers and add it to the brine.

Once the turnip is sweating liquid on its surface, remove the weight and lid. Pick up handfuls of the turnip slices and squeeze them very firmly, until nothing more drips from it. Discard the liquid. Add the turnip to the brine with the kombu and stir well to combine. Cover with a drop lid and a 1-pound weight and let sit for 2 hours.

Your pickle is now ready to eat. Kept covered in a jar or other airtight container, it will keep in the refrigerator for at least a month.

# PICKLED MUSTARD GREENS

## (TAKANAZUKE)

Where do Japanese culture and the American South meet? Well, they both love fried food (remove the bones from fried chicken and you've got karaage). There's the shared appetite for pickled watermelon rind. And then there's this pickle, at home on both tables. And while garlic isn't a traditional supporting flavor in takanazuke, I think it's a worthy addition (though you may certainly omit it, if you wish). If mustard greens aren't available, this also works beautifully with any kind of radish green. This pickle kicks butt with fried rice or noodles, fried chicken, or pork in almost any form.

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• TIME: 2 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS •

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12 ounces curly mustard greens, either whole or stems removed for less bite

2 tablespoons kosher salt

1 cup unseasoned rice vinegar

3 tablespoons sugar

1 teaspoon dried chile flakes

1 clove garlic, finely minced

Chop the greens into ⅓-inch strips and, in a large bowl, toss them with the salt. Cover with a drop lid and add a 1-pound weight. Let the greens sit for 1 hour.

Wash the greens well to rinse off some of the salt and remove dirt. Squeeze them very, very dry—put some muscle into it!—and stuff them into a very clean 1-pint jar.

In a small saucepan over medium heat, combine the rice vinegar, sugar, chile flakes, and garlic and stir just until the sugar dissolves, 2 to 3 minutes.

Pour the brine over the greens until they are submerged completely. Wait until the brine settles, then pour in as much additional brine as you can (you're not canning this, so filling to the brim is fine). Cover with the lid and let the greens sit on the countertop for 24 hours. Move to the refrigerator and let sit for 1 more day. Enjoy! Kept chilled, these greens will keep for at least a month.

INSPIRED PICKLES

# “SITTING FEE” CABBAGE PICKLE

This one pickles up so fast and with so few ingredients, it will likely be on your regular pickle rotation (it’s on mine). Why the name? When I would go to bars in Japan in the 1990s, sometimes tiny dishes of this sort of tsukemono were placed before patrons as they were seated. It would often be stale and not taste very good, but it didn’t really matter. The point was not to eat it—it was just there to represent the fact that you were going to be charged a “sitting fee” (usually the equivalent of $5 to $15) for your seat in the bar. When it’s fresh and homemade, however, you need not fear: it is a delicious, quick, and nicely textured pickle.

• TIME: ABOUT 45 MINUTES • MAKES ABOUT 4½ CUPS •

1½ pounds green cabbage

2 tablespoons kosher salt

Juice of 1 lemon

2 tablespoons toasted black sesame seeds

Discard the tough outer leaves of the cabbage. Cut the cabbage into quarters lengthwise. Cut out and discard the core from one quarter, chop the quarter in half lengthwise again, and slice into 1-inch pieces. Cut the remainder of the cabbage this same way, separating the leaves as necessary.

Place the cabbage in a large bowl and sprinkle with the salt; toss gently. Allow the cabbage to sit for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Using your hands, squeeze the cabbage very tightly to make it rain. It can take a full minute to really extract the juices. Discard the liquid and return the cabbage to the bowl. Stir in the lemon juice and sesame seeds, and the cabbage is ready to eat. It will keep refrigerated in an airtight container for 1 week.

# MIXED GINGER AND SHISO PICKLE

By no means a traditional tsukemono, this recipe combines two of my favorite flavors with the firm, squeaky crunch of napa cabbage into one slaw-like pickle. This is also a great way to show off your homemade gari and your homemade pickled shiso leaf, but don't sweat it if you don't have either.

• TIME: ABOUT 1 HOUR • MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS •

10 ounces napa cabbage leaves

1 tablespoon kosher salt

5 ounces carrots, peeled, trimmed, and julienned

2 tablespoons pickled ginger, homemade or store-bought, minced

2 tablespoons chopped green onion, white and tender green parts only

15 fresh, salted, or pickled shiso leaves, finely chopped

1 tablespoon mirin

2 tablespoons Japanese soy sauce

Cut the cabbage leaves in half lengthwise, then chop into ½-inch pieces. Toss with half of the salt in a large bowl, then cover with a drop lid and 10 ounces of weight. In a smaller bowl, toss the carrots with the remaining salt, then cover with a drop lid and 5 ounces of weight. Allow both to sit for 30 minutes.

Remove the weight and lid from the cabbage and squeeze it very firmly until it rains out its water. Discard the cabbage liquid and return the cabbage to the bowl. Discard any liquid from the carrots and add them to the cabbage. Add the ginger, green onion, shiso, mirin, and soy sauce and toss to combine. Eat immediately, or store airtight and refrigerated for up to to 1 week.

# USING A DROP LID

You can buy wooden drop lids (as well as pickling vessels) made especially for pickling, but this is not necessary. For a pickling bowl or bucket, try the ceramic insert of your slow cooker or a clean large glass jar (even a scrubbed, clean fishbowl with a wide mouth) will work. The drop lid just needs to fit inside the container—you could try a plate, the lid to a food storage container, a saucer for a flowerpot (clean and wrapped in plastic wrap), or a saucepan lid. Weights placed atop a drop lid allow you, the pickle maker, a lot of control over the rate of the pickle's compression. Again, special weights can be purchased, but why bother? Cans or bottles from your pantry, or even clean rocks, can be used: weigh them on a kitchen scale to find the object or combination of objects that will give you the weight designated in the recipe.

*Pickled Shiso Leaves and Shiso Vinegar*

# PICKLED SHISO LEAVES AND SHISO VINEGAR

Shiso is remarkable. The green variety has the most alluring shape. And the red turns everything it touches the most lovely purply hue. The flavor is remarkable; while many compare it to mint, thyme, or basil, I think it stands all on its own. This simple preparation makes the most of this herb, which can be challenging to find fresh (though it's easy to grow). This recipe also yields two wonderful kitchen staples: shiso vinegar and pickled shiso leaves. The vinegar is excellent on fresh vegetables, particularly cucumbers. The pickled leaf is an unusual aromatic that plays nicely with chicken, in salads, on sandwiches, or with rice.

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• TIME: ABOUT 2 WEEKS • MAKES ABOUT 1½ OUNCES PICKLED SHISO LEAVES AND 1½ CUPS SHISO VINEGAR •

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2 ounces fresh red or green shiso leaves

1½ cups unseasoned rice vinegar

Pack the shiso leaves into a clean, odor-free jar with a tight-fitting lid. Pour the vinegar over the shiso and push down on the leaves to make sure they are completely submerged in the liquid. Store in a cool, dark place for 2 weeks, gently shaking the jar every couple of days.

After 2 weeks, drain the vinegar and store it in a pouring bottle on the shelf; the flavor will be at its best for about 2 months. Lay the leaves out on a sheet of wax paper, cover with another sheet of wax paper, and store in an airtight container. These will keep, refrigerated, for at least a month.

# PICKLED ASIAN PEAR WITH LEMON

This pickle is not traditional, but Asian pears (nashi) always make me think of Japan. It was the first place I'd ever seen nashi—they grow like weeds there. Have you never had the pleasure? Asian pears are worth seeking out! Imagine the texture of jicama with the juiciness of an apple and the really light sweetness of a pear. Look for them in Asian markets in the fall—even if you're not stickin' 'em in a pickle, these beige orbs are excellent eating. However, if nashi aren't on your local menu, any kind of pear will suffice here; just look for specimens that are on the small side and rather firm. Eat this pickle on its own, on a sandwich, in a salad, or paired with blue cheese.

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• TIME: 3 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS •

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2 pounds Asian pears, or any other sweet, firm pear

4 (2-inch) pieces lemon zest

Juice of 1 lemon

4 slices pickled ginger, homemade or store-bought

1½ cups sugar

1½ teaspoons kosher salt

1 cup white wine vinegar

2 tablespoons mirin

Select pears that are firm and on the small side. Peel them, cut them into quarters, and core them. Combine the lemon zest, lemon juice, ginger, sugar,

salt, vinegar, and mirin in a medium nonreactive saucepan without heating; don't worry that the sugar is not yet dissolved. Add the pears to the pan to coat them in the acidic brine.

Meanwhile, fill a second medium saucepan with water and bring it to a simmer. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the pears to the simmering water, leaving behind as much of the brine as possible. Simmer the pears until they turn white and are just cooked through but still quite firm, about 6 minutes. The pears should be pierced easily with a fork, but you don't want them to overcook and get mushy. Drain the pears and transfer them to 2 clean 1-pint jars, packing them tightly and tucking them under the curved shoulders of the jar.

Bring the brine to a boil, uncovered, stirring to dissolve the sugar, about 2 minutes. Once it's boiling, turn off the heat. Divide the ginger and lemon zest between the two jars. Pour the brine over the pears to cover completely (reserve the leftover brine). Tighten the lids on the jars immediately and let them rest on the countertop for 24 hours before moving them to the refrigerator. The pears are ready to eat in 3 days but taste even better after 5 days. They will keep their flavor for about 1 month in the refrigerator, but the color will begin to change after 2 weeks.

I know, I know … leftover brine. Let it cool, pour it into a shaker bottle, and combine with your favorite salad oil. It makes a wonderful salad dressing.

**NOTE** *This pickle can be canned. Just start with sterilized 1-pint jars and lids, and process the sealed jars in a hot water bath for 10 minutes. The pickle will keep unopened for a year; refrigerate after opening and use within a month.*

# CUCUMBER ARAME PICKLES

Quick + Pickle = Quickle! And this is one of my fave quickles—clean, crisp, salty. You may be tempted to chop the cukes a little smaller, but here's why you shouldn't: they will take on too much of the soy sauce and become unbearably salty. Arame brings a nice briny flavor and a complementary color and texture to the cucumbers.

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• TIME: ABOUT 30 MINUTES • MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS •

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1 pound Persian, Kirby, or other small pickling cucumbers

¼ cup Japanese soy sauce

¼ ounce dried arame

½ teaspoon black sesame oil

Wash the cucumbers, then trim the ends and discard. Cut the cucumbers into 1½-inch-long pieces. In a medium bowl, toss the cucumbers with the soy sauce and let sit for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, cover the arame in water and soak for 15 minutes (or follow the preparation instructions on the package). Do not oversoak. Drain the arame and squeeze it firmly to release as much moisture as possible.

Add the arame and sesame oil to the cucumbers and stir to combine. Serve immediately, chopping the cucumbers into smaller, bite-sized pieces if you wish. This pickle will keep refrigerated in an airtight container for at least 1 week.

# PUCKERY EGGPLANT IN MUSTARD PICKLES

I know I'm not alone in this opinion: eggplant is rarely delicious. It is often too bitter, or too greasy, or too mushy, or just … too eggplanty. But this version is none of those things. The eggplant is firm and flavorful, bold and puckery. When umeboshi meets with mustard, taste buds have been known to explode. And a bonus for the lazy, you don't even have to peel the eggplant. I love to eat this over steamed rice or in onigiri (rice balls), and it's also mighty fine beside pork belly.

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• TIME: 3 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP •

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10 ounces long, slim Japanese eggplant

1 tablespoon kosher salt

2 umeboshi, homemade or store-bought

¼ cup umezu, homemade or store-bought

2 tablespoons sugar

1 tablespoon prepared yellow mustard

2 teaspoons mirin

Wash and dry the eggplant, then trim the ends and discard. Leave on the peel, and chop the eggplant into ¼-inch-thick rounds. In a medium bowl, toss the eggplant with the salt, cover with a drop lid and 1 pound of weight and allow it to sit for 1 hour. Drain and rinse the salt off the eggplant and squeeze it dry in a clean kitchen towel.

Meanwhile, make the brine. In a wide, shallow bowl, mash the umeboshi with a fork and discard the pits. Mix in the umezu, sugar, mustard, and mirin. Add the eggplant and turn it to coat it in the brine. Cover with a drop lid and a 1-pound weight and allow the pickle to sit for 1½ hours.

Transfer the pickle and its brine into a glass jar with a tight lid. Place in the refrigerator for 3 days before eating. Kept covered and refrigerated, this pickle will keep for at least 1 month.

*“Wasabi” Pickled Carrots*

# “WASABI” PICKLED CARROTS

Why am I using “quotes” below for *wasabi*? Because while this is bursting with wasabi flavor, there is no actual wasabi in it. Real wasabi is hard to come by. And the stuff you and I have access to in the grocery store—the green-tinged powder, or that gunk in the tube—is just dreadful; it’s full of artificial color, preservatives, and mysterious chemicals, and the flavor shows it. Instead, I hereby direct you to buy yourself a fresh bottle of prepared horseradish, close your eyes, and tell yourself it’s wasabi for this recipe and for any sushi you make at home. If you must, add a little green food coloring or spirulina powder for color. Leftover horseradish can be smeared on your roast beef sandwich, or saved for the gefilte fish on Passover.

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• TIME: ABOUT 1 HOUR • MAKES ABOUT 2¼ CUPS •

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1 pound carrots, preferably a mix of colors, peeled

4 teaspoons prepared horseradish

1 tablespoon kosher salt

4 teaspoons sugar

1 teaspoon dried chile flakes

1½ teaspoons very finely minced or grated fresh ginger (use a Microplane grater if you have one)

Using a vegetable peeler, cut the carrots into ribbons, getting as much out of each carrot as you can; discard (or eat) the nubs.

In a medium bowl, combine the carrots with the horseradish, salt, sugar, chile flakes, and ginger and toss very well, using a fork (or two, if necessary) to

really work the seasoning into the carrot ribbons. Cover with a drop lid and a 1-pound weight and let sit for 30 minutes, retaining any liquid that accumulates in the bottom of the bowl. After a quick toss, the pickle is ready to eat; covered and refrigerated, it keeps for at least 6 weeks.

# KOREA

WHEN AND HOW TO SERVE KIMCHI AND BANCHAN

BASICS OF KOREAN PICKLING

## KIMCHI

WHOLE LEAF KIMCHI (BAECHU KIMCHI)

CUBED RADISH KIMCHI (KKAKDUGI)

SQUID KIMCHI (OJINGEO JEOT)

ROLLED MUSTARD GREEN KIMCHI (KAT KIMCHI)

STUFFED CUCUMBER KIMCHI (OI-SOBAGI KIMCHI)

SUMMER RADISH KIMCHI (YEOLMU KIMCHI)

WATER KIMCHI (NABAK KIMCHI)

## BANCHAN

DRIED DAIKON (MU MALENGI)

MARINATED BEAN SPROUTS (KONGNAMUL)

PICKLED CUCUMBERS (OIJANGAJJI)

PICKLED GARLIC (MANUL CHANGACHI)

MUSHROOMS IN SOY SAUCE (PYOGO BOHSOT)

SPINACH WITH SESAME (SIGEUMCHI NAMUL)

SWEET SHREDDED DAIKON AND CARROT (MUSAENGCHAE)

SPICY FERMENTED RED CHILE PASTE (GOCHUJANG)

THE VAST POPULARITY OF KOREAN FOOD is no surprise for those enchanted with its fire, its assertive personality, and its surprising ability to give a bold boost to old standards (kimchi taco/hot dog/pancake/snack cake, anyone?). One premise must be declared before you and I can move forward: Korean pickles are the bomb.

My love story with kimchi has a familiar backdrop: the dingy, barbecue smoke–filled, no-frills dining rooms of the San Francisco Bay Area's best Korean eateries. Sure, I initially came in for the well-marinated, flame-grilled bulgogi; hot, steaming bowls of kimchi jjigae; and sizzling and addictive stir-it-yourself dolsot bibimbap. But it was the variety of banchan—the copious small side dishes, including kimchi, that complement a Korean meal—that kept me coming back. As a longtime lover of condiments and pickles, I dived headfirst into cabbage kimchi and daikon radish kimchi, and went cuckoo for sesame spinach, sweet shredded radish and carrots, bits of savory dried daikon, and various salted greens. My chopsticks would linger over each offering like fingers twirling above a box of chocolates—hmmm … what should I taste next? To my joy, almost every one I tried was a flavor explosion.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

When it comes to Korean pickles, napa cabbage kimchi is the avatar of all things Korean and vegetable (for this, jump right ahead to the recipe for Whole Leaf Kimchi). Unlike the bread-and-butter pickle slice that may or may not be next to your sandwich, kimchi is unquestionably a part of a Korean meal—it's nonnegotiable. This single foodstuff has completely infiltrated Korean culture: there is kimjang, the annual communal kimchi-making ritual that happens each November all over the country; there is a kimchi museum in Seoul and a kimchi institute of culture; and one of the most requested wedding gifts of modern-day Koreans is a specialized kimchi refrigerator—for many, a fridge, with its precise temperature controls and wide storage capabilities, beats the ancient practice of burying earthenware crocks underground. Kimchi—its flavor, health-enhancing properties, and other virtues—is a frequent subject of conversation in Korea and, increasingly, beyond. For me, it just makes rice come alive, and eating some foods without it—such as fried rice, noodles, or beef tacos—feels like some sort of undue punishment.

Like the term *pickle* itself, *kimchi* is nearly impossible to define succinctly. (That said, there was a famous legal battle against Japanese kimchi producers in which the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's Codex Alimentarius—the same folks who label regionally specific food products like Champagne and Parmesan cheese—proclaimed that only Korean-made kimchi products were authentic.) There are countless varieties of kimchi. Often it is hot;

sometimes not—some kimchi are cooling, with only a mild hint of garlic and ginger, while others pack a pungent wallop. Often it is all vegetable, but dried fish, anchovies, oysters, shrimp, squid, and beef broth are frequently invited to the party. It tends to be fermented, but some kimchi are meant to be eaten fresh. Like art, kimchi may elude definition, but we kimchi addicts know it when we see it.

And kimchi styles are quite literally all over the (Korean) map. Generally, northern kimchi styles have less salt and seasoning and more water, and as the kimchi trail travels south, the pickles become hotter, thicker, and packed with more strong flavors. Much of what Americans have come to think of as kimchi seems to reflect the more potent and prevalent southern styles.

## WHEN AND HOW TO SERVE KIMCHI AND BANCHAN

Meals in Korea could be modeled on my dreams: pickles and tasty, salty side dishes morning, noon, and night. Banchan are the array of tiny dishes traditionally served at the Korean table; they almost invariably include kimchi. A typical Korean meal consists of a rice bowl and a soup bowl for each person, and communal dishes such as noodles or stew. Dishes of banchan to be shared are placed in the center of the table, with diners serving themselves bites as they eat. Banchan are meant to refresh and cleanse the palate—hence the tendency toward big, bold flavors—and they also add a healthy dose of vegetables and meat to the meal.

The sheer variety of banchan can blow your mind. They make eating a Korean meal into a limitless Choose Your Own Adventure story—different every time. Quickly cooked seasoned vegetables—namul—bring a hit of sweetness or savoriness to the table; see Spinach with Sesame and Marinated Bean Sprouts. Various nonfermented pickles (jangajji), such as Mushrooms in Soy Sauce, also bring in the familiar Asian pickling flavors of vinegar and soy sauce. A proper Korean banchan array may also offer stir-fried, steamed, or boiled food. I have included here recipes that sample a range of banchan

because, even when they are not pickled, fermented, or brined, banchan all play the role of pickles in Korean cuisine—small bites eaten alongside the main meal to recharge the taste buds.

One of the best things about banchan is their capacity to surprise. Offerings vary from eatery to eatery and from home to home. But they can vary also from day to day and from season to season. A diner is never sure how many there are going to be—traditionally, there will be three, five, seven, or nine, or, for very formal meals, twelve. Prepared by a masterful chef, the colors, the textures, the temperatures all are meant to work together.

For the home cook, enjoying a variety of banchan means stocking the fridge with a few jars of long-lasting pickles and kimchi, and sometimes preparing a few fresh banchan to breathe new life into a simple meal. But don't sweat the numbers—any one of these recipes puts bite and soul into a humble plate of rice or noodles, meat or soup, tofu or vegetables. So pick one or two or go overboard with more—when you have banchan, you have all of the components to make a simple meal more complex and satisfying.

Introducing banchan into your eating is a ticket to ride for both flavor and texture. Let's start with the basics.

## BASICS OF KOREAN PICKLING

Which flavors are the biggest, baddest, and boldest? You'll find them in a Korean pickle. Salt? Lots of it—don't even try to get low sodium here. Garlic? By the bulbful. Ginger? Blinding you with its bite. Green onions, fish sauce, soy sauce, sesame oil, and, of course, ground dried chile pepper till the cows come home. In varying amounts, these are the iconic flavors of kimchi and many banchan. But what else sets Korean pickles apart?

- **LACTO-FERMENTATION**. Korean pickles get their sparkle and tang because many of them are fermented before being eaten. Even if you have tried at sauerkraut and failed, know that kimchi is quite possibly the easiest fermentation to pull off. Salt, hot peppers, garlic, and ginger are all antimicrobial—they help protect the food from spoilage as it ferments,

giving it the best chance to avoid mold and harmful bacteria. Jump-starting a pickle with some fish sauce, a compound that is already fermented, puts your fermentation more assuredly into high gear.

What happens during fermentation (apart from the work of magical elves)? Naturally occurring bacteria in the air convert the sugars in raw vegetables into lactic acid, acetic acid, and carbon dioxide. The rise in acidity lowers the pH of the whole pickle to levels that prevent spoilage for several months. There. If you want more science than that, you're going to have to go read Harold McGee.

- **CANNOT BE CANNED.** Canning? No. Not for the pickle recipes of Korea. Fermented foods should never be canned, as they are living foods, and the high temperature just kills their flavor, texture, and health benefits. (One taste of grocery store canned sauerkraut and you'll see what I'm talking about. Blech!) For the pickles here that aren't fermented, they're just not acidic enough to can, nor do these recipes make large enough quantities to merit bringing a canning pot to a boil. And most of the banchan aren't even close to having the salt, sugar, and acidity necessary to make them safe cupboard foods. In fact, for many recipes in this book, canning jars aren't even the best vessels for storage, as they're too tall, and the precious liquid that keeps a pickle wet and fresh all falls to the bottom. As much as you may love to wave your canning tongs around the kitchen, you may shelve them for another day.

- **STRONG SMELLS AND FLAVORS.** Do you enjoy lifting a wad of well-aged cheese to your nostrils? Does its foot-like perfume make you salivate in anticipation or cringe in disgust? Before getting into the Korean pickling business, particularly before fermenting kimchi, you must come to terms with the aromas that these pickles are going to bring to your home—and we're not talking Island Apple Gooseberry Potpourri. To put it crassly, kimchi stinks. All that garlic, left sitting around for days … it's absolutely delicious, but smelly the way that great cheese is. Additionally, there will be some fishy flavors and odors—not too much (there is only so much the Western palate can take)—but they will be present. Your senses may need to come to terms with the fact that you'll have squid (for example) sitting on your countertop for three days. If you really despise the odor, note that

you can pack your pickles tightly and contain their fermenting aroma in the refrigerator, but it will take a lot longer before they're ready to eat—say two weeks or more as opposed to three days.

- **PLENTY OF SALT.** Salt is absolutely critical in Korean pickles. Many pickling vegetables, particularly in kimchi, are first tossed with salt to pull out some of their moisture, but the salt also permeates the vegetables, opening their cell walls and giving them flavor. Don't be alarmed by the quantity of salt called for in these recipes—much of it will either be rinsed away or heavily diluted by the natural moisture of the vegetables. And furthermore, many Korean pickles (though certainly not all) are meant to be assertively salty, as salt not only preserves the pickles but adds flavor to a meal.

## TWO TIPS FOR WORKING WITH GARLIC

Trust me, no vampires will bother you once you start bringing bulb upon bulb of garlic into your home to make many of these recipes. Since you and garlic are going to get so well acquainted, let me give you a few tips on getting the best results from this voracious beast.

**PEELING GARLIC:** Many cooks have already learned that the best way to get the tough husk off of a clove of garlic is to give it a quick whack with the side of a knife on a cutting board. But if you have a lot of garlic to peel, there's a faster method that I learned from a video by Saveur (www.saveur.com/article/Video/video-How-to-Peel-a-Head-of-Garlic-in-Less-Than-10-Seconds) and use in my kitchen regularly. Place the garlic cloves in a very large metal bowl. (Glass will work too, but be careful that it doesn't fly out of your hand! I've found that this technique does not work as well with soft plastic

bowls, or with bowls that are too small.) Place another metal bowl of equal size on top to form a dome, hold the two bowls together tightly, and then vigorously shake the garlic up and down in the bowls for 10 to 15 seconds. Magic! The skins just slough off.

**REMOVING GARLIC SMELL FROM YOUR HANDS:** Some people love the lingering stink of the Italian rose on their hands, and that's fine. However, I'm more of a Chanel girl myself. To remove the heavy garlic smell from your skin, simply touch your hands to a piece of metal—I usually just wrap my hands around the nozzle of my kitchen faucet. Works like a charm, and it's much more effective than several scrubbings with soap and water.

KIMCHI

# WHOLE LEAF KIMCHI

## (BAECHU KIMCHI)

This is the de facto national pickle of Korea, and a quintessential kimchi. Note that kitchen shears, and not a knife and cutting board, are the best way trim your pickled cabbage quarters down to a manageable size without letting that intoxicating liquor from the cabbage that gives it juice and flavor ooze out.

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• TIME: 4 TO 6 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 8 CUPS •

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5 pounds napa cabbage heads

½ cup Maldon sea salt

1½ cups water

3 tablespoons sweet rice flour or all-purpose flour

¼ cup gochujang, homemade or store-bought

2 tablespoons sugar

¾ cup Korean chile flakes

9 to 12 cloves garlic, peeled

1 (2-inch) piece unpeeled fresh ginger

2 tablespoons fish sauce

Discard the tough outer leaves of the cabbage. Cut the cabbage in half lengthwise just through the base, then pull apart the upper portion of the two halves with your hands. Cut the halves in half again at the base, pulling the quarters apart with your hands. You should have 4 to 8 long quarters of cabbage, depending on how many heads you started with.

Measure the salt into a small dish and, working with one section of cabbage at a time, lightly sprinkle salt between the leaves, beginning with the outermost leaves. Concentrate more salt on the stem end than on the green leaves. Line the cabbage chunks up “head to toe,” cut side up, in a 9 by 13-inch baking dish. Pack them snugly; if they don’t all fit, you can let a couple of the quarters rest on top of the others. Cover with a board or large drop lid and weight it with 5 pounds. After 30 minutes, flip all the pieces over so they are cut side down, replace the board and the weight, and let sit for another 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the sauce. In a small saucepan over high heat, bring the water to a boil. Whisk in the flour and lower the heat to a simmer, stirring constantly for 1 to 2 minutes to smooth out and thicken the mixture. Turn off the heat and, while the slurry is still warm, whisk in the gochujang, sugar, and chile flakes.

In a food processor, mince the garlic and ginger until they are as finely chopped as your machine can get them—the vegetables will stop whirling around the bowl. Add the cooked flour mixture to the work bowl along with the fish sauce and process until fully smooth, about 1 minute.

Uncover the cabbage and hold each quarter up by its root end over the dish. Squeeze out excess moisture with your hands and lay the drained cabbage on a plate. Pour out any liquid in the bottom of the dish—don’t be concerned if there’s not a ton of liquid.

Then, working with one cabbage section at a time, spoon 1 to 1½ teaspoons of the sauce on each leaf, starting with the bottom outside leaves and working your way in. Don’t worry if the sauce does not fully coat the leafy tops yet.

Return the cabbage to the baking dish, packing it in “head to toe” once again, this time stuffing all of the cabbage (now much more flexible) into the dish.

Scrape the remaining sauce over the top of the cabbage. Use your hands to work the sauce into the top of the leaves of the cabbage, and roll the cabbage around to fully coat it on all sides.

Place a layer of plastic wrap directly, but loosely, on top of the kimchi, leaving room for air to come in along the sides. Place the board back on top and weight again with 5 pounds. Cover the whole assemblage loosely with a clean kitchen towel to keep out insects and debris but let air flow in. Let the cabbage rest in a cool, dark place for 4 to 6 days, until it takes on a pleasantly fermented odor. Don’t worry if you see liquid pooling in the bottom; this is part of the transformation.

Once it’s fermented to your liking, your kimchi is ready to eat. You can cut up one cabbage section at a time to serve it in smaller pieces, or simply trim off and discard the root ends for longer pieces. Pack the kimchi tightly into an airtight container and refrigerate. It can be eaten raw for at least 6 weeks, and then be used for cooking for at least another 6 weeks.

# CUBED RADISH KIMCHI

## (KKAKDUGI)

This is a classic spicy and fermented pickle, though some people really prefer to eat it fresh. The daikon remains really crispy and juicy no matter when you eat it. It's brilliant on rice or stir-fried with beef or tofu. And while I don't make this one as hot as it could be, it will certainly make its presence known on the table. You should feel free to pump up the chile flakes as you see fit.

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• TIME: 1 TO 3 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS •

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2 pounds daikon radish

1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons fine sea salt

2 tablespoons sugar

2 large cloves garlic, minced

1 (¾-inch) piece unpeeled fresh ginger, minced

¼ cup Korean chile flakes

2 tablespoons fish sauce

Peel the radish and chop it into bite-size cubes. In a large bowl, toss the radish cubes with the salt and sugar. Let sit for 30 minutes, stirring once halfway through.

Drain the radish, discarding the liquid. Return the radish to the bowl and toss it with the garlic, ginger, chile flakes, and fish sauce, and pack it down firmly into the bowl.

Place a layer of plastic wrap directly, but loosely, on top of the radish, leaving room for air to come in along the sides. Cover the bowl loosely with a clean kitchen towel to keep out insects and debris but let air flow in. Let it sit in a cool, dark place for 1 to 3 days, stirring once each day, until it has a pleasingly fermented aroma.

To store, pack into a shallow square or rectangular container, ideally glass or ceramic, which won't retain odors. This pickle will keep in the refrigerator for at least 2 weeks.

# SQUID KIMCHI

## (OJINGEO JEOT)

Yupsie, you read right: fermented squid. While many Korean pickles are based on vegetable matter, many also possess the taste of the sea—especially those from Korea's coastal regions. Fish sauce, oysters, pollack, shrimp, and a variety of dried seafood are common ingredients in kimchi, namul, and other banchan, but for the most part I have gone lightly on them here because I'm just not used to super strong fishy flavors. But we had to have at least one, and this is a winner as both a stand-alone banchan and an ingredient for cooking. I think you'll be surprised how pleasantly mild and meaty the fish becomes, but note that this pickle is both pretty fiery and pretty fishy. While it can be eaten straight up, I often use it as I would cured anchovies—to flavor stir-fried green beans, cauliflower, or noodles.

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• TIME: 3 TO 5 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 1⅓ CUPS •

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1½ pounds fresh whole squid, or 11 ounces cleaned frozen squid

3 tablespoons fish sauce

2 tablespoons gochujang, homemade or store-bought

2 tablespoons Korean chile flakes

2 cloves garlic, minced very fine or mashed to a paste

1 jalapeño chile, stemmed and sliced as thinly as possible, with seeds (if you like it hot) or without

1 teaspoon sugar

1 (¾-inch) piece unpeeled fresh ginger

If you're using fresh squid, know that you are punk rock. Take pride and pleasure in ripping off their heads and squeezing out their guts. Rinse to make sure they are completely clean, and pat dry. If you're using frozen squid, you're still a good person. Let them thaw completely, drain any excess moisture, and pat dry.

Chop the squid bodies (save the heads for another use) into ½-inch pieces; rings if your squid are small, squares if they're not. Transfer to a small bowl and pour over the fish sauce, stirring to coat. Let the squid sit for 2 hours.

Drain the squid, discarding the fish sauce. Rinse under running water and drain again, then pat dry with paper towels. Put it back in the bowl and add the gochujang, chile flakes, garlic, jalapeño, and sugar. Thinly slice the ginger and press it through a garlic press or mince it very finely, then add it to the bowl.

Mix all the ingredients so the squid is well coated. Spoon the squid into a glass or ceramic jar and just place the lid on top, without screwing it shut. Allow to ferment in a cool, dark place for 3 to 5 days. The finished pickle will have a pleasantly fermented aroma.

Once fermented, the pickle is ready to eat. Refrigerated in an airtight container, this will keep for at least 2 months.

# ROLLED MUSTARD GREEN KIMCHI

## (KAT KIMCHI)

Fermented mustard greens pop up more in China and Southeast Asia (and in the American South, for that matter) than they do in Korea. This is a riff on bossam kimchi, a stuffed kimchi that traditionally uses a cabbage wrapper. Mustard greens (pictured here) offer a little more variety to your pickle pantry, and they are a little sturdier for rolling. This is a very pretty pickle, all tied up in a green onion bow, and it is as delicious fresh as it is fermented. That said, I also include a slacker option that just involves chopping the greens and mixing them with the flavoring paste.

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• TIME: 2 HOURS TO 4 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS •

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1½ pounds curly mustard greens

2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons fine sea salt

½ cup Korean chile flakes

1 (2½-inch) piece peeled fresh ginger, coarsely chopped

3 tablespoons water

9 cloves garlic

2 tablespoons fish sauce

1 bunch green onions

Using a paring knife on the backside of each mustard green leaf, shave down the length of the rib to the stem, being careful not to cut into the leaf itself; this helps to flatten the leaf and make it pliable. Then trim off the stems at the base of the leaves so that there's nothing sticking out. You want to end up with whole mustard leaves, minus the tail of the stem, that are pliable enough to bend.

Wash the greens well, shake to dry, but don't dry them completely. Stack them in a shallow dish, sprinkling the salt evenly between the leaves, particularly around the tougher stem area. Lay a flat board or drop lid over the leaves and weight with a 1-pound weight for 1 hour.

Meanwhile, in the work bowl of a food processor, combine the chile flakes, ginger, water, garlic, and fish sauce and process until the ingredients form a thick paste. You will likely need to scrape down the sides of the work bowl at least once.

If you plan to roll your pickles, count your leaves. (If you'd rather not roll, see the note below.) Pull the same number of fronds off the green onions (plus a few more for good measure). Bring a small saucepan of water to a boil. Once it's boiling, blanch the fronds for 30 seconds, then run them under cold running water until completely cool. Let them drain, then lay them out to dry on a clean kitchen towel.

Remove the weight and board from the greens; they should be soft and pliant. Rinse the greens, then squeeze them hard to get out all the excess liquid, being careful not to tear them. Lay them flat between two kitchen towels and pat them dry.

Now it's time to roll 'em up. Lay down a single leaf with its bottom closest to you. Place a rounded teaspoon of the paste in the center of the leaf about a third of the way up. Fold the left third of the leaf over the filling and then the right. Then, rolling up from the bottom, roll the leaf around the filling into a small bundle—like stuffed cabbage.

Secure each little bundle with one of the green onion fronds; I promise this sounds more fussy than it is. Take one blanched onion frond and lay it down.

Place the stuffed leaf roll in the center. Using the green onion as a ribbon, tie a flat double knot by first tying the left over right, then the right over left. Follow suit with the remainder of the mustard green rolls. At this point, the pickle can be eaten fresh.

To ferment this pickle, nestle the rolls into a shallow dish and place a layer of plastic wrap directly, but loosely, on top of the rolls, leaving room for air to come in along the sides. Cover with a board or drop lid and place a 1-pound weight on top. Cover the whole assemblage loosely with a clean kitchen towel to keep out insects and debris but let air flow in. Let the pickle sit in a cool, dark place for 2 to 4 days, until it emits a pleasantly fermented odor.

Pack the pickle into a glass or ceramic container (plastic will retain its strong aroma) with a tight lid. Refrigerate until cold. Your pickle is ready to eat, and it will keep in the refrigerator for at least a month.

**NOTE** *If the rolling business isn't for you, simply chop the wilted greens with the green parts from 4 green onions and mix them with the red pepper paste before fermenting.*

*Stuffed Cucumber Kimchi*

# STUFFED CUCUMBER KIMCHI

## (OI-SOBAGI KIMCHI)

There's something satisfying about taking a huge, honking bite of something delicious, right? Like a giant hunk o' brownie, or stuffing in a huge piece of sushi all at once. Choking hazard aside, it gives your mouth a full fireworks show of flavor, texture, and excitement on every taste bud, all at once. That's this pickle: a cool cucumber, standing upright, stuffed to the brim with blazing heat, garlic, and ginger. And you'll be amazed at how pretty it is on a plate.

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• TIME: ABOUT 1½ HOURS • MAKES 14 STUFFED CUCUMBER BITES •

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3 pounds English hothouse cucumbers or thin-skinned salad cucumbers on the slim side

2 tablespoons fine sea salt

1 medium carrot, peeled and trimmed

2 green onions, roots and tough tops trimmed and outer leaves removed

9 cloves garlic

1 (2-inch) piece peeled fresh ginger, coarsely chopped

¾ cup Korean chile flakes

1 tablespoon fish sauce

1 tablespoon sugar

½ ounce dried shrimp (optional)

Wash the cucumbers and trim and discard the ends. Cut the cucumbers into fourteen 2-inch sections. Stand each piece upright on a work surface and cut an X shape halfway (1 inch) down into each piece, leaving the bottom inch intact. Stand the cukes up in a shallow dish and sprinkle the salt on their bottoms and tops and down into the X cut. Let them sit upright for 1 hour to leach out some of their juice.

Meanwhile, prepare the filling. Dice the carrot and the green onions. You can do this by hand, or by cutting them into chunks and pulsing about 20 times in a food processor. Transfer to a small bowl.

In the work bowl of a food processor, combine the garlic, ginger, chile flakes, fish sauce, sugar, and dried shrimp. Puree into a paste, pausing to scrape down the solids from the sides. This should take about a minute. Once smooth, fold the paste into the carrot and green onions.

Drain any liquid that has pooled in the bottom of the cucumber dish, and lightly pat the cucumbers dry with a paper towel or kitchen cloth. Stuff 2 to 3 teaspoons of the filling into each cucumber, working to get as much into the center as possible, and mounding a dollop on top.

These pickles are ready to eat immediately, or they can be served at room temperature for about 12 hours. Unused portions should be refrigerated and eaten within 3 days.

# SUMMER RADISH KIMCHI

## (YEOLMU KIMCHI)

Too often when we think of radishes for kimchi, we think of large white autumn daikon, or the smaller springtime variety of daikon known as ponytail or bachelor radish (which have the same light crispness as larger daikon). But why should cold weather radishes get all the glory? This is not a traditional pickle, but it's a good one. The tiny pink radishes commonly used on salad plates have a more fiery bite than daikon does, and they make for a fabulous, scorching kimchi that's especially beautiful when their greens are still attached.

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• TIME: 2 TO 3 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS •

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2 large bunches of salad radishes, greens and roots attached

2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon fine sea salt

3 cloves garlic, minced

¼ cup gochujang, homemade or store-bought

Wash the radishes well, particularly the greens. Slice each radish in half lengthwise, leaving some greens attached to each half. In a large bowl, toss the radishes with the salt, really rubbing it into the radish bulbs and the greens. Cover with a drop lid or a plate and place 1½ pounds of weight on top; let sit for 1 hour.

Rinse the radishes well under running water. Squeeze, squeeze, squeeze the greens with all your might, getting out all of the moisture possible. Return the radishes to the bowl and, using your hands, massage in the garlic and

gochujang evenly. Press down firmly on the radishes to make them compact, and place a layer of plastic wrap directly, but loosely, on top of the pickle, leaving room for air to come in along the sides. Replace the drop lid and weight, and cover the bowl loosely with a kitchen towel to allow air in and keep out insects and debris. Let the pickle sit in a cool, dark place for 2 to 3 days, until it has a pleasantly tangy and fermented aroma. Toss the pickle to coat it with the liquid all over and pack it into a 1-pint jar. Your pickle is ready to eat. Refrigerated, it will keep for 3 months.

*Water Kimchi*

# WATER KIMCHI

## (NABAK KIMCHI)

How many times have you stood in the kitchen with a jar of brine, the pickles all gone, wishing you had some use for it? Here's the very cool and unique thing about this spring/summer pickle: you drink the brine along with the vegetables. It's like a drink, a cold soup, and a pickle all at once. This is not the longest-lasting pickle, but its delicate, refreshing flavor means it's one that you'll make often. It is also widely regarded (and, uh, kitchen tested) as both a chaser for shots and a very effective hangover cure.

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• TIME: ABOUT 3 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 8 CUPS •

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13 ounces daikon radish, peeled, quartered lengthwise, and very thinly sliced

1 pound napa cabbage, halved lengthwise, cored, and chopped into 1-inch pieces

½ firm sweet pear, unpeeled, quartered lengthwise, and very thinly sliced

2 carrots, peeled, trimmed, and cut into ⅛- to ¼-inch-thick half-moons

2 tablespoons fine sea salt

2 small cloves garlic, thinly sliced

1 (1-inch) piece unpeeled fresh ginger, minced

2 teaspoons Korean chile flakes

1 tablespoon sugar

4 cups cool water

Combine the daikon, cabbage, pear, carrots, salt, garlic, and ginger in a large bowl and toss well to evenly distribute the salt. Let sit for 30 minutes, stirring once halfway through. Drain the vegetables in a fine-mesh sieve and rinse gently under running water.

Pack the vegetables snugly into a 48-ounce or larger container, preferably ceramic or glass, as plastic will retain the pickle's strong perfume. In a separate container, mix the chile flakes and sugar into the water until the sugar is dissolved. Pour all of the liquid over the vegetables; you want there to be more than enough to cover the vegetables completely. Fill a small plastic bag with water or stones, secure it, and put it on top of the vegetbles to keep them fully submerged.

Allow this pickle to sit in a cool, dark place for about 3 days; small fermentation bubbles will begin to surface. Once it has fermented lightly, remove the plastic bag, cover the container, and refrigerate. It will keep for about 2 weeks. This pickle should be served in a small bowl along with its delicious brine.

*Dried Daikon*

BANCHAN

# DRIED DAIKON

## (MU MALENGI)

Daikon is an unsung vegetable hero, capable of transforming itself into the craziest shapes and textures. What I love about this pickle is that the comically large white radish, once dried, is almost unrecognizable; it takes on a sweet flavor and a fruit leather/jerky texture. It's totally different than Cubed Radish Kimchi or Sweet Shredded Daikon and Carrot. I hate to play favorites, but this is one I keep around more often than not.

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• TIME: ABOUT 3½ HOURS • MAKES ABOUT 1¼ CUPS •

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1½ pounds daikon radish

1 tablespoon fine sea salt

2 tablespoons black sesame seeds

1 tablespoon Japanese soy sauce

5 teaspoon sugar

1 tablespoon black sesame oil

1 teaspoon Korean chile flakes

1 clove garlic, minced

2 tablespoons water

Wash the daikon and trim the ends, but don't peel it. Slice the daikon into long ¼-inch-thick pieces—for now, the length and the width aren't important, as you'll cut them again later. Lay them flat in a shallow baking dish or pan. Sprinkle with the salt and toss to coat evenly. Let the radish sit for 15 minutes to sweat out some of its moisture.

Lightly rub the oven racks with vegetable oil (or if you prefer, rub two large wire cooling racks with oil). Preheat the oven to 200°F and position both oven racks in the middle.

Rinse the radish under running water and let it drain. Dry it in a single layer between two clean kitchen towels, pressing on it to remove as much moisture as possible.

Lay the daikon strips on the racks in a single layer, without touching. Place a wooden spoon in the oven door to keep it slightly ajar, and allow the daikon to dry for 1½ to 2 hours. The daikon is done when it darkens in color and becomes dry and pliant without getting hard.

Meanwhile, put the sesame seeds into a small skillet and place over medium-high heat. Let the seeds toast until they become aromatic, 2 to 3 minutes, then pour them immediately into a small bowl.

In a medium bowl, combine the sesame seeds, soy sauce, sugar, sesame oil, chile flakes, garlic, and water. Cut the dried daikon into strips 2½ inches long and ½ inch wide and add it to the mixture, stirring to combine. Allow the pickle to sit for 30 minutes before eating. Kept covered, this pickle will keep in the refrigerator for at least 2 months.

# MARINATED BEAN SPROUTS

## (KONGNAMUL)

Bean sprouts, particularly cooked ones, don't usually take center plate spotlight in the Western world, but this is one of the most common banchan, and it adds a nice bit of visual and geometric variety to a table full o' pickles. While soybean sprouts can also be used in this dish, they can often be difficult to find, and they have a slightly challenging fungus-y taste and aroma. However, if you do find them, boil them for about 8 minutes. White, tender, and crisp mung bean sprouts are a fine, super-accessible alternative.

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• TIME: ABOUT 20 MINUTES • MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS •

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1 tablespoon black sesame seeds

10 small dried chile peppers

1 tablespoon Japanese soy sauce

1 tablespoon black sesame oil

Green top of 1 green onion, sliced into thin rings

1 pound mung bean sprouts

Put a 4-quart pot of water on to boil. While you're waiting for it to boil, put the sesame seeds into a small skillet and place over medium-high heat. Let the seeds toast until they become aromatic, 2 to 3 minutes. Pour the seeds into a medium bowl.

Return the skillet to medium-high heat and add the chile peppers. Allow the peppers to blacken on one side, then flip them to blacken on the other; this

should take about 3 minutes. Add them to the sesame seeds, then add the soy sauce, sesame oil, and green onion and stir to combine.

Pour the sprouts into the boiling water and cook until tender, 2 to 3 minutes, stirring frequently. Drain well, then add them to the sesame seed mixture and stir to combine. Your sprouts are ready to eat, either hot, cold, or at room temperature. Kept covered, they will keep in the refrigerator for about 5 days.

# PICKLED CUCUMBERS

## (OIJANGAJJI)

I first tasted this recipe from the hand of Chef Sunhui Chang of FuseBox in West Oakland, California. He is a master of the pickle, making fresh batches of both creative and traditional kimchi and other banchan every Sunday; he also first inspired me to try my hand at making my own gochujang. This is a simple cucumber preparation, but one that is entirely addictive—take it to a picnic and watch it disappear. These pickles go down easily alongside nearly everything, particularly grilled beef and an ice-cold beer.

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• TIME: 3 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS •

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1 to 1½ pounds small pickling cucumbers

2 tablespoons fine sea salt

2 large cloves garlic, lightly crushed

Whites of 2 green onions

2 teaspoons Korean chile flakes

1½ cups unseasoned rice vinegar

½ cup sugar

About ½ cup water

Roll the cucumbers vigorously back and forth on a cutting board to rough up their skin a bit. Wash them, then trim and discard the ends. Cut the cucumbers into 1-inch-long cylinders and place them in a shallow dish.

Sprinkle the salt on them, roll them around in the salt to coat, and let them sit for 30 minutes, giving them an occasional roll to distribute the salt evenly.

In two 1-pint jars, evenly distribute the garlic, green onions, and chile flakes. Rinse the salt from the cucumbers, drain them, and pack them tightly and evenly into the jars.

Now make the brine. In a small saucepan, combine the vinegar and sugar and bring to a boil. Pour the boiling brine over the cucumbers evenly to cover and add water as needed to cover the vegetables completely. Cover tightly, shake lightly, and let cool on the countertop for 24 hours. Refrigerate for 2 days; your pickles are now ready to eat. Kept refrigerated, these pickles will keep for at least 2 weeks.

# PICKLED GARLIC

## (MANUL CHANGACHI)

Though they're cured, salted, spiced, and sweetened, these potent cloves still let you know that they're garlic to the core. Peel a few and plate them as part of a spread of side dishes for any meal. Or make this pickle your secret ingredient in rice porridge or noodle soup, sprinkle it into omelets, or tuck it into kimbap (Korea's answer to sushi). This is also a great foray into pickling; even though the waiting time is long, the hassle is minimal and the results are gargantuan.

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• TIME: 6 TO 7 MONTHS • MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS •

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2 heads garlic

¾ cup distilled white vinegar

About ½ cup water

¾ cup Japanese soy sauce

2 tablespoons sugar

1 teaspoon Korean chile flakes

Slough off the outer papery husks of the garlic heads, leaving the bulbs intact. Place both heads in a 1-pint jar, along with the vinegar and enough water to fill the jar. Cover and shake to combine the vinegar and water. Remove the lid and place a clean stone or a resealable plastic bag filled with water on top of the garlic to keep it submerged in the liquid. Cover the jar loosely with its lid, but don't secure it in place. Let the garlic sit for 1 month, checking periodically to make sure it remains submerged.

After a month, drain the garlic, reserving the infused brine for another use, such as a dressing or marinade. Return the garlic to the jar and add the soy sauce, sugar, chile flakes, and enough water to cover the garlic completely in the brine. Cover loosely with the lid and let sit in a cool, dark place for 5 to 6 months. Be sure to peel the garlic cloves before using. Taste the infused cloves; you can let them sit longer until the flavor has mellowed to your liking. The garlic can be stored, refrigerated, in the marinade for at least a year.

*Mushrooms in Soy Sauce*

# MUSHROOMS IN SOY SAUCE

## (PYOGO BOHSOT)

I took some liberties with this recipe; the real deal is simply shiitake mushrooms sautéed in soy sauce and sesame oil. However, I wanted these mushrooms to have a little more depth and character, and I really love the combination of the sugar and vinegar with the bold garlic, ginger, and chile. This makes the dish feel more like a pickle and less like a side dish. If cremini mushrooms aren't luxurious enough for you, feel free to substitute shiitakes in their place.

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• TIME: ABOUT 1½ HOURS • MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS •

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6 tablespoons Japanese soy sauce

1 teaspoon Korean chile flakes

2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon light brown sugar

3 tablespoons unseasoned rice vinegar

1 (⅓-inch) piece peeled fresh ginger, very finely minced

1 small clove garlic, minced

Green tops from 2 green onions, sliced into thin rings

1 pound cremini mushrooms

Put a large pot of water on to boil. While you're waiting for it to boil, make the marinade. In a medium bowl, combine the soy sauce, chile flakes, sugar, vinegar, ginger, garlic, and green onions. Set aside.

Wash and drain the mushrooms. Trim and discard the tough ends of their stems and slice them lengthwise ¼ inch thick. Cook the sliced mushrooms in the boiling water for 30 seconds, stirring continuously. Use a large slotted spoon to remove the mushrooms from the pot into a colander; reserve the water for later use as soup stock or to boil pasta. Or if you'd rather not fuss with that, simply drain the mushrooms in a colander. Rinse the mushrooms under cold running water to stop the cooking, stirring with your hands. Drain the mushrooms very well and use a clean kitchen towel or paper towels to blot off excess water.

Add the mushrooms to the marinade and stir thoroughly to combine. Allow the mushrooms to sit at room temperature for 1 hour before eating. The mushrooms can be stored, covered, in the refrigerator for at least a month.

*Spinach with Sesame*

# SPINACH WITH SESAME

## (SIGEUMCHI NAMUL)

Is there someone in your house who won't touch their greens? This pickle-ish, pungent side dish is a way to make them irresistible. The recipe is pretty straightforward, but I must implore you: don't use the bags of prewashed baby spinach meant for salads. I mean, you can, but you will likely not be as happy with the results; the dish will end up too watery and bland, as it's very difficult to squeeze those tiny baby leaves dry. Seek out dirty ol' bunches of grown-up spinach with the roots attached for the best results.

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• TIME: ABOUT 30 MINUTES • MAKES 3 CUPS •

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1 pound 6 ounces fresh spinach

2 tablespoons white sesame seeds

2 cloves garlic, finely minced

6 tablespoons Japanese soy sauce

2 teaspoons black sesame oil

2 teaspoons Korean chile flakes

2 tablespoons sugar

1 teaspoon unseasoned rice vinegar

Put a large pot of water on to boil. Meanwhile, wash the spinach by soaking it thoroughly in a basin or sink full of water, swirling it with vigor and making sure to leave the root ends attached. Wash as thoroughly as needed to ensure

that the spinach gets really clean (spinach with the roots attached often hides dirt in the darndest places). Allow the washed spinach to drain in a colander.

In a small skillet over medium-high heat, toast the sesame seeds until fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes. Pour the seeds immediately into a medium bowl to cool. Add the garlic, soy sauce, sesame oil, chile flakes, sugar, and vinegar and stir to combine.

Once the water is boiling, add the spinach all at once, using a utensil to submerge it in the water and to stir it for even cooking. Cook for 1 minute, just enough so the spinach wilts but retains its bright green color.

Drain the spinach in a colander and immediately rinse with cold water, stirring it with your hands, to cool the spinach and stop its cooking. Working in 4 batches, gather the spinach into bundles. Holding each bundle by its root ends, squeeze the greens to remove the water, starting from the stems and working your way down to the leaves. Squeeze repeatedly and very firmly, until not a drop more liquid can be released. (Really get in there and *squeeze*!) Roll up the spinach tightly inside a clean kitchen towel (or two) and squeeze again to truly extract as much moisture from it as possible.

Lay the spinach flat on a cutting board and cut off and discard the root ends. Chop the spinach into 4 equal lengths. Add it to the soy sauce mixture and toss well to coat. The spinach is now ready to eat. Kept covered and refrigerated, the spinach will keep for 4 days.

# SWEET SHREDDED DAIKON AND CARROT

## (MUSAENGCHAE)

This sweet-but-not-too-sweet, crisp, salad-like slaw keeps things interesting. It's fast to put together, and its mild flavor makes it irresistable enough for sandwiches (think about your favorite Vietnamese banh mi here), hot dogs, or tacos, or as a more traditional side dish with grilled seafood or fried fish.

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• TIME: ABOUT 1½ HOURS • MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS •

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12 ounces daikon radish, peeled

1 medium carrot, peeled

5 teaspoons Maldon sea salt

Green top of 1 green onion, sliced into thin rings

6 tablespoons sugar

½ cup unseasoned rice vinegar

Using a vegetable peeler, cut the daikon and carrot into long ribbons. Collect the ribbons in a medium bowl. Toss the daikon and carrot with the salt, using your hands to work it in evenly. Press the vegetables down into the bowl tightly; they will start to exude lots of liquid very quickly. Let them sit for 10 minutes to draw out more moisture.

Drain in a colander and rinse lightly under running water. Squeeze gently and drain again. Return the vegetables to their bowl, add the green onion, and mix

well.

In a small saucepan set over medium heat, heat the sugar and vinegar, stirring constantly, just until the sugar dissolves, 1 to 2 minutes.

Pack the vegetables into a 1-pint jar and pour the brine over the top to cover them completely. Screw the lid on the jar and let the pickle sit on the countertop for 1 hour. Your pickle is now ready to eat. Unused portions can be covered and kept refrigerated for up to a month.

# SPICY FERMENTED RED CHILE PASTE

## (GOCHUJANG)

This hot, sweet, fermented paste is both condiment and ingredient—it's used extensively in soups and stews, and, of course, it's a great flavoring for pickles. The traditional recipe for gochujang uses ingredients that I could not easily find, like barley malt powder and soybean malt. I've used much more accessible ingredients to create results that are spicy, deeply flavored, and loaded with umami—much akin to a Chinese fermented bean paste. Yes, it takes a while for this to ferment to its full flavor potential, but the results will happily live in your refrigerator for at least a year. It's best to start this lengthy fermentation project during the cooler months.

• TIME: 6 TO 7 MONTHS • MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS •

10 ounces dried soybeans

1 head garlic, cloves separated and peeled

1 pound koji rice

½ cup plus 2 tablespoons fine sea salt

1¼ cups Korean chile flakes

½ cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar

About 1 cup water

Cover the soybeans by 4 inches in cool water and let them sit for at least 12 hours but not more than 24. Drain and rinse thoroughly.

In a large pot, cover the beans by 2 inches with fresh water. Cover the pot and bring to a boil, then lower the heat and simmer for about 4 hours, stirring occasionally, until the beans are very soft. Drain the beans, discarding the cooking liquid. Return the beans to the pot and mash them thoroughly with a potato masher.

Mince the garlic very fine (note that a food processor will make short work of this task). Add the garlic to the soybeans, along with the koji rice, the ½ cup of salt, the chile flakes, and the sugar, and thoroughly combine with a wooden spoon or your hands. Pour in about ½ cup of water and mix it in well. Then test the mix for consistency: grab a fistful of the mixture and squeeze. It should be wet enough to just squeeze through your fingers. If not, add more water bit by bit until it's wet enough to do so.

Pack the gochujang tightly into a very clean, tall 2-quart (or larger) container, ideally of ceramic or glass, though food-safe plastic will work, too. (Note, however, that plastic may take on and retain the gochujang's odors, and it will not keep a cool temperature as well as ceramic or glass.) With your hands or the back of a spoon, press down firmly on the mixture to release any small air bubbles and flatten the top. Sprinkle the 2 tablespoons of salt evenly over the flattened top, particularly around the edges, and use a damp cloth to wipe away any small bits of the mixture that may be smeared on the sides of the container. Lay a small sheet of plastic wrap directly over the top of the mixture loosely (not over the mouth of the vessel; push the plastic wrap down into the jar, then pull it back from the edges a bit), leaving a bit of breathing room at the edges. Place a drop lid on top of the plastic wrap and put a 1-pound weight on top. Cover the whole assemblage with a secured, clean kitchen towel to let air flow in but keep out insects and debris, and place the vessel in a cool, dark place.

Let the gochujang sit and ferment for 6 to 7 months. It will darken in color, especially the top—this is fine. Check for mold once a week for the first month or so, and then about once every couple of weeks. If you see some, remove it and sprinkle a bit more salt in its place. Otherwise, keep the gochujang covered and cool.

When it has fermented properly, the aroma will be pleasantly fermented and mellow and the gochujang will have darkened in color. Scrape off and discard the top 1½ inches or so of very dark and very salty gochujang. Spoon the remainder into the work bowl of a food processor and puree into a paste, adding up to ½ cup of water as needed, a tablespoon at a time, to help it blend completely. Taste it: if you'd like it to be spicier, you can add more chile flakes at this point, processing the mixture to fully incorporate. Your gochujang is now ready to use, and it can be stored in glass jars with tight lids. Kept covered and refrigerated, it will keep for at least a year.

# CHINA

WHEN AND HOW TO SERVE CHINESE PICKLES AND SAUCES
BASICS OF CHINESE PICKLES AND SAUCES

## TRADITIONAL PICKLES

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TIANJIN PRESERVED VEGETABLE (TIANJIN DONGCÀI)
RADISH IN CHILE OIL (YAN ZHÌ LUÓBO)
PRESERVED STEAMED LEMONS (YAN ZHÌ NÍNGMÉNG)
SALT-PRESERVED EGGS WITH STAR ANISE (YÁN PÍDÀN)
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## INSPIRED PICKLES

FIVE-SPICE PICKLED CARROTS
SALT-CURED LONG BEANS WITH GINGER
SOUR CELERY AND RED PEPPER
SICHUAN CUCUMBERS WITH ORANGE AND ALMONDS
HONG KONG PICKLED PAPAYA, SHALLOTS, AND CUCUMBER
SHANGHAI CABBAGE AND CHILE
SHAOXING TOFU

## SAUCES

CHILE SAUCE
CHILE-BLACK BEAN OIL
XO SAUCE

CHINA IS A COUNTRY WITH a long history of taking its pickles and condiments very seriously. And yet here in the West, Chinese pickles—when they appear at all—have been relegated to jars of questionable quality on dusty shelves at the Asian grocery. This is a culinary travesty that I am hoping you and I can undo. There's a magic to Chinese pickles that turns them into

something far greater than the sum of their parts—like fabric, sticks, and string transformed into a soaring kite.

The Middle Kingdom is home to some of the oldest codifications of cuisine (take that, France!), and it is by far one of the globe's oldest known food-preserving cultures. We have the Chinese to thank for fermented soybeans (the edible grandparent of soy sauce), sake and Chinese rice wine, rice vinegar, miso—many of the most commonly used condiments and flavors of East Asian cuisines. The Chinese discovered the mold and the processes still employed to craft these foods today.

China's long history is also full of kitchen tinkering: evidence of drying, smoking, salting, fermenting, and pickling go back to the Zhou Dynasty, three thousand years ago. During the Qing Dynasty (which lasted from the seventeenth century to the early twentieth), the imperial court was staffed with a myriad of food specialists; among them was one lucky fool employed to do nothing but cultivate and serve the royal pickles. And in the 1970s, a fascinating archeological find was the two-thousand-year-old tomb of a woman buried in her kitchen during the Han dynasty, one of most food-centric eras of them all. (In fact, we have the Han to thank for fermented black beans, noodles, and our favorite dim sum buns.) The tomb contained dozens of ingredients, cooking tools, and cooking instructions—and pickles aplenty in crocks.

## THE EVOLUTION OF CHINESE PICKLES

The original word for pickle in Chinese, *tsu*—which translates literally to "salt and incubate"—dates back to the Chou dynasty around 1100. The first Chinese preserved foods were more like condiments, and they were a savory blend of fermented meat and salt, sometimes mixed with wine and mold cultures. It wasn't until the sixth century that making brine-pickled vegetables and fruits—what we tend to think of as

pickles—came into common practice. Today, salted pickles (yen tsai) and acidic pickles (suan tsai) from either lacto-fermentation or a vinegar brine remain in common practice.

## WHEN AND HOW TO SERVE CHINESE PICKLES AND SAUCES

If your insatiable lust for all things brined is equal to mine, then you know that there is no bad time for pickles of any kind. Clearly, the Chinese know it, too; Chinese pickles appear on a number of places on the menu as both appetizer and ingredient.

Before a meal, they're used to help stimulate the appetite, typically paired with wine, beer, spirits, or tea. Small dishes of pickles are set out, often with other finger snacks like flavored nuts, and guests simply help themselves as they drink and chat.

A proper Chinese meal should always contain *fan*—the grain, which is the heart of the meal. At one time this was usually millet, but over time it has become rice, noodles, or various breads and pancakes. Anything that tops or accompanies these grains—all your meat, tofu, fish, vegetables, sauces—is called cai (or tsai), and is a purely optional (although more flavorful) component. So tea, pickles, and a bowl of rice are more than enough for a meal. Add fresh vegetables or protein and you have a freakin' feast—quick, delicious, and better for you than that burrito/pizza/burger you ate last Tuesday.

So while we in the West usually serve one or three pickles alongside a sandwich, pickles in China are meant to be consumed in copious quantities as the flavor base of a meal (which is why my heart belongs to Chinese pickles). Myriad recipes call for some kind of preserved vegetable to flavor and enhance meat, poultry, seafood, and vegetables. Pork is often seen in the company of Preserved Mustard Greens or Tianjin Preserved Vegetable, either

tossed in the wok or bubbled in soup. Spicy Blackened Sichuan Pickled Peppers or Salt-Cured Long Beans with Ginger are deeply delicious and attractive served on their own as finger foods or stir-fried with beef and cabbage. Pickled Shallots pair perfectly with tofu or fried noodles, and tropical Hong Kong Pickled Papaya, Shallots, and Cucumber is fish or chicken's best friend.

And the sauces? All of the best foods are dipped or drizzled. If you're a fan of hot food, then you'll always want to have Chile Sauce on hand for everything that comes out of your wok or skillet. No self-respecting dumpling or dim sum would be served without Chile-Black Bean Oil, and once you taste the pure umami luxury of XO Sauce, your fried rice or wheat noodles or stir-fried vegetables will never be the same.

# BASICS OF CHINESE PICKLES AND SAUCES

While some Chinese pickles involve lengthy waiting periods, attention to fermentation, or intricate preparations, for the home cook there are plenty of "quickles" (quick + pickle = quickle) and other preserved foods that are not only delicious from the jar, but also make some of the best ingredients for preparing finished dishes on the entire Asian continent. These doable and highly palatable pickles are the ones I've gathered here, accompanied by a number of recipes of my own that showcase great Chinese flavors, some traditional, some inspired. And just for good measure, I also include a few how-tos on some of the essential Chinese sauces that taste best when made in your own kitchen. Let's explore what else makes Chinese pickles unique.

- **SIMPLE FLAVORS.** All these pickles strike a balance among the six flavors that dominate Chinese cuisine: sweet, sour, pungent, salt, bitter, and savory. Some are spicy, and some have the floral notes of Sichuan pepper, but overall, fans of grandma's pickles are going to find these balanced flavors familiar and pleasurable: vinegar, salt, garlic, ginger, soy sauce, hot chiles, and a hint of sugar come into play, and the taste of the vegetables

has the opportunity to shine through. Think of Chinese pickles as yachts on calm seas: gently riding flavor waves, occasionally venturing into new waters, but mostly keeping your meal awash in a welcome brine. Ahoy, ahoy!

- **CANNING JARS NEED NOT APPLY.** As I mentioned a bit ago, all the recipes that follow are intended to be accessible and inviting enough to find a permanent place on your menu rotation.

  So, you ask, can I can them? No.

  First of all, why bother? These recipes don't make quantity enough to merit bringing a canning pot to a boil. Also, many of these mild jar huggers just aren't acidic enough for the long haul on the shelf. (There is one exception—the Five-Spice Pickled Carrots.) And while many of these pickles will last for weeks, you will likely use them quickly enough, either in stir-fries or stirred into congee, to blow through your store in short order. As much as I love to wave my canning tongs around the kitchen, yours may safely be stored for another day.

TRADITIONAL PICKLES

# SPICY BLACKENED SICHUAN PICKLED PEPPERS

## (YAN LÀJIAO)

It's a snack food, it's a condiment, it's an ingredient, it's a floor wax. Okay, one of these statements is false—but I'm not telling which. Ha! What I will say is that these puckery peppers are not for the faint of heart. Heat and tang are going to gang up on you and fight it out on your tongue. Factor in the unexpected herbaceous, floral kick of Sichuan peppercorns and gin, though, and the brawl becomes a party. Eat these alone, stir-fry them with beef, or slice them up and use them as a topping on anything from tacos to omelets. I double dog dare you to stick one in a Bloody Mary. In short, you have been warned: these are habit-forming.

• TIME: 3 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 2¾ CUPS •

11 ounces Fresno chiles

1 teaspoon peanut oil

½ teaspoon Sichuan peppercorns

1 cup distilled white vinegar

1 cup water

3 thin slices fresh ginger

2 cloves garlic, smashed

1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons sugar

1½ teaspoons kosher salt

⅓ cup good-quality gin or Shaoxing wine

Wash the peppers and trim off the tail ends of the stems, leaving the peppers whole. Use a toothpick to stab about 6 tiny holes around the stem end of the fruit.

In a Dutch oven or any heavy-bottomed pot large enough to hold all of the peppers in a single layer, heat the oil over high heat. Add the peppers in a single layer and let them sear for about 4 minutes until they are blackened in spots. Flip the peppers and blacken the other side, about another 3 minutes.

Lower the heat to medium, add the peppercorns to the pot, and stir them in with the chile peppers. They should become fragrant after 3 minutes. To the pot, add the vinegar, water, ginger, garlic, sugar, and salt and stir to combine. Simmer, uncovered, for 5 minutes to let the peppers soften.

Turn off the heat. When the bubbling subsides, add the wine and stir. Let sit until everything is cool enough to handle, then transfer the peppers and their brine into clean jars with tight lids. Leave on the kitchen counter for 24 hours before refrigerating; eat after 3 days. Kept cold, this pickle will keep for at least a month.

# TIANJIN PRESERVED VEGETABLE

## (TIANJIN DONGCàI)

This pickle is much less salty than the store-bought version and has incredible sour flavor. You begin with what appears to be a boatload of cabbage, ferment it with garlic until it's sour and pungent, and then dry it out to make a much smaller amount of supersour condiment, which you can then use to flavor soups and stir-fries. Drying it really concentrates the flavors, but I invite you to also enjoy this pickle krauted before it hits the drying oven. Note that fermentations like this work best in the cooler months; the cooler temperatures slow down the fermentation process and help prohibit unwelcome mold. Oh, and why am I so picky about the cabbage being fresh? That means it has the liquid necessary for a stable fermentation. Choose cabbage and bok choy that appear heavy for their size; this means there's more liquid inside.

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• TIME: ABOUT 2 WEEKS • MAKES ABOUT 1¾ CUPS •

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1 pound 3 ounces very fresh napa cabbage (tough outer leaves removed), finely chopped

7 large cloves garlic, thinly sliced

2 tablespoons fine sea salt

2 pounds very fresh bok choy, finely chopped

In a large bowl, combine the napa cabbage with the garlic. Measure the salt out into a small bowl.

Using a large and freshly cleaned pickling crock, the ceramic insert to a slow cooker, or a glass jar large enough to hold all of the contents snugly, pack in about a quarter of the bok choy very tightly and sprinkle just a little of the salt on top. (Note that you should use a little more salt for each subsequent layer, and that you will have six layers to salt; make sure you end up with about a third of the salt left to cover the top.) Follow suit with the remainder of the bok choy in three more layers, continuing to pack the bok choy down very tightly as you go and adding a small amount of salt to each layer. Then pack in half of the napa cabbage mixture and salt it. Pack in the remaining cabbage and sprinkle the remaining salt on top, paying particular attention to the edges where the vegetable meets the crock.

Now you're going to abuse the cabbage fiercely. Smash the contents of the crock with a clean blunt object—such as a wooden mallet handle, the bottom of a wine bottle, or the end of a French rolling pin—repeatedly for 5 to 10 minutes, until the cabbage feels very, very wet. The motion should be a downward hit of force to compress the cabbage. You're not mixing it, but bruising it to get it to give up some of its juice. I promise you won't hurt the cabbage's feelings. Keep smashing and taking out your aggressions until the liquid from the cabbage surfaces when you press on it with an open palm.

Pack the cabbage down into the crock as tightly as you can and cover it with a drop lid that fits inside your vessel but does not touch the sides. Weight the lid with 2 pounds (try using clean rocks or glass jars full of water) and let sit for about 10 minutes. The drop lid should be completely covered in liquid before proceeding. If not, bruise the cabbage again, repack it, weight it, and check for liquid again.

Cover the whole assemblage (cabbage, lid, and weight) with a secured, clean kitchen towel to keep out insects and debris. Let your crock sit in a cool place while it ferments; peek under the towel and check the crock daily. It should develop a quite pleasant fermented odor and there should continue to be liquid at the top. If small bits of viscous, white, or green mold appear, simply scrape them off and discard. If any pink or fuzzy mold appears, discard the whole crock full of cabbage and start again with a very clean crock.

Allow your pickle to ferment for about 2 weeks, or until you're satisfied with its fermented aroma and flavor.

At this point, you have a delicious kraut that is ready to eat, and can be refrigerated in sealed containers for storage. Kept cold, this kraut will keep (continuing to ferment slowly), for about 2 months.

For this pickle, however, we're going to take one more step and drain and dry the kraut. Preheat the oven to 200°F. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the kraut (without its juice) to an 8 by 8-inch baking dish. (I strongly encourage you to reserve the remaining fermented liquid nectar for drinking or use it as a brine to start another batch of krauted pickles—simply pour it over chopped vegetables until they are fully submerged and keep refrigerated for a week. Stored on its own in the fridge, this liquid will last almost indefinitely). Place the dish on the lowest rack of the oven and keep the oven door open slightly (you can prop it with the handle of a wooden spoon.) Allow the pickle to dry out for about 3 hours, then stir; you'll notice that it will begin to turn slightly beige. This is expected. Dry for 3 more hours, stirring again, then 3 hours more until it is beige all over, but still quite moist and pliant.

Let the pickle cool, then pack it tightly into a jar or other container for refrigerator storage. It is ready to eat and it will keep for at least a year.

# RADISH IN CHILE OIL

## (YAN ZHÌ LUÓBO)

This pickle is a staple—and one of the most frequent preserved vegetables found at your local Chinese grocery store. I think daikon radish is the way to go, but feel free to experiment with any other kind of large winter radish, including watermelon radish, black radish, or even mild turnip. Note that you don't have to make your own chile sauce for this recipe, but the option is there for the culinary overachievers among us. The heat in chile sauce can vary not only from brand to brand and from batch to batch, but also depending on the age of the bottle sitting in your refrigerator door—so add chile sauce to taste.

• TIME: 3 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS •

1½ pounds daikon radish, trimmed

2 tablespoons kosher salt

2 tablespoons soy sauce

2 to 3 tablespoons chile sauce, homemade or store-bought

1 tablespoon black sesame oil

2 teaspoons sugar

Peel the radish and chop it into ½-inch-thick disks, then slice the disks into ¼-inch strips. In a medium bowl, toss the radish with the salt and let it sit for 30 minutes, stirring it once halfway through.

Drain the resulting liquid and discard, and rinse the radish to rid it of some of its saltiness. Return the radish to the bowl and toss it thoroughly with the soy sauce, chile sauce, sesame oil, and sugar.

Pack the radish and all of its liquid into a shallow container with a tight lid. Let it sit on the countertop for 24 hours before refrigerating. Your radish is ready to eat after 3 days. Refrigerated, it will keep for about 2 weeks.

*Preserved Steamed Lemons*

# PRESERVED STEAMED LEMONS

## (YAN ZHÌ NÍNGMÉNG)

Our first thought about preserved lemon is that it's a Moroccan flavor, but it is prevalent in Chinese cooking as well. I still have memories of a Chinese-style sun-dried preserved lemon with prune I once bought at a flea market in Hawaii and have yet to successfully replicate. This recipe, however, I have perfected with the help of the owner of the Duc Loi Supermarket in San Francisco's Mission District. I saw her putting her giant jars up to preserve near the window, and when I asked, she told me to steam the lemons, then dry them, then preserve them—an oft-used technique for long-term preservation. The lemons will turn murky gray; don't worry—this is part of the process. Shave, slice, or mince just the lemon rind (discard the pulp) to add a lemony but earthen, puckery flavor to congee, fish, or stews, or boil a whole lemon into a soup for a unique flavor.

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• TIME: AT LEAST 6 MONTHS • MAKES 3 OR 4 PRESERVED LEMONS •

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3 or 4 good-sized lemons

1 cup kosher salt

4½ cups water

Scrub the lemons well under running water, then steam them for 10 minutes in a steaming basket set over boiling water. If you don't have a steaming basket, improvise with a colander or a sieve set over a large cooking pot and covered to keep the steam in.

Preheat the oven to 200°F.

Remove the lemons from the steamer with tongs or a large spoon, let cool enough to handle, then dry well with clean kitchen towels.

Place the lemons directly on a clean oven rack or on a wire rack placed over a baking sheet. Prop the oven door open slightly with the handle of a wooden spoon and let the lemons dry for 4 hours. Turn off the heat and let the lemons sit in the oven (or another dry place, if the oven is needed) for 8 hours or overnight. The lemons will begin to collapse a bit; this is desirable.

Pack the lemons into a clear 3-quart or larger jar or plastic container. In a pitcher, combine the salt and water, stir until the salt dissolves, then pour it over the lemons. If the lemons try to float, fill a plastic bag with water, knot the top, and use it to submerge them. Put the jar near a window where the lemons will get frequent and indirect sunlight and let them sit for 6 months. As they age, they will become darker in color and will cave in on themselves even more.

Whole lemons can be stored at room temperature, but a cut fruit should be refrigerated submerged in brine. These lemons will keep for several years, continuing to get darker and more intensely flavored.

# SALT-PRESERVED EGGS WITH STAR ANISE

## (YÁN PÍDÀN)

These eggs are in salt water for several weeks, making them an infusion and not a fermented pickle, though they are preserved without refrigeration. They serve a pickle-like purpose though, adding their magnificent uber-eggy flavor to various dishes. The porous shells of the eggs take in the nice bite of salt from the water and the warmth of the star anise; the texture of the yolks will toughen up a bit and their color will intensify. Soft-boiled after infusing, these eggs are excellent mixed into congee, floated in a noodle soup, or sliced in half and served with fried rice.

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• TIME: 5 WEEKS • MAKES 6 EGGS •

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4 star anise

6 eggs

¾ cup kosher salt

3 cups cool water

Choose a 3-quart or larger clear glass or plastic container with a lid. Place it on a stable surface in a cool, dark place. Put the star anise in the container, then carefully place the whole eggs inside, being careful not to crack them.

In a pitcher, combine the salt and water and stir. Gently pour the brine over the eggs to cover them completely. If the eggs try to float, fill a plastic bag with water, knot the top, and use it to submerge them.

Allow the eggs to sit for 5 weeks—they can sit longer, but they will get saltier over time. There will be no change in their appearance.

To serve, use a slotted spoon to gently lift the desired number of eggs from the brine and place them carefully in a small saucepan. Pour fresh water over the eggs to cover completely, cover the pan, and bring to a rapid boil. Turn off the heat, keep the pan covered, and let the eggs sit for 6 minutes, then run cold water over them until they are cool enough to peel. The whites will be set but soft, and the yolk will be firm and very orange. Once the eggs are peeled, you can chop or halve them or serve them whole, depending on your preference; note that these eggs must still be cooked before eating.

## THE PERFECT PICKLE VEHICLE

Why do I include congee in a pickle book? Because congee is an outstanding blank canvas for chopped Asian pickles of any kind—as well as your refrigerator's holdings of chopped leftover chicken, fish, tofu, beef, cooked vegetables, cilantro, or hard-boiled egg, as well as frozen peas and corn, fried garlic, and on and on.

I hate to compare congee (or jook, as it's also known) to mere porridge, gruel, or Cream of Wheat, as all of these things have such low bowl appeal to the Western palate. Trust me: this thick and creamy seasoned rice soup fills the soul. It's like the chicken soup with matzo balls of the Far East—humble ingredients coming together into pure cold-weather comfort. This soup, eaten any time (but particularly for breakfast) is filling and savory. Each bowl is a collaboration between cook and diner; I like mine seasoned with a jolting dose of white pepper, soy sauce, Salt-Preserved Eggs with Star Anise, and Chile-Black Bean Oil. If you love Asian comfort dishes like noodle soup and fried rice, I urge you to try the supernatural do-it-all delicious simplicity of congee.

# CONGEE

• TIME: ABOUT 2½ HOURS • MAKES ABOUT 12 CUPS •

1 cup jasmine rice

4 cups chicken stock, preferably homemade

8 cups water

3 tablespoons minced fresh ginger

1 teaspoon ground white pepper, plus more for serving

3 tablespoons Japanese soy sauce, plus more for serving

Any other ingredients you want to use (see headnote)

XO Sauce, Chile Sauce, or Chile-Black Bean Oil (optional)

Rinse the rice in a fine-mesh sieve until the water runs clear. Add it, along with the broth and the water, to a large stockpot set over high heat. Boil for about 15 minutes, covered, stirring frequently to keep the rice from sticking to the bottom.

Stir in the ginger, lower the heat to maintain a low boil, cover, and cook, stirring from time to time and scraping the bottom of the pot. As the congee thickens, keep lowering the heat to keep it from adhering to the pot.

After about 2 hours, the rice will really begin to dissolve into the liquid. Stir it vigorously or use a whisk to help break it down. Its consistency should be quite velvety and creamy, with no visible grains of rice remaining.

Once the consistency is correct, add the pepper and soy sauce, along with any other ingredients you care to use. Stir to combine, then leave over low heat for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, to allow the ingredients to heat through.

Ladle into serving bowls, then top with additional white pepper and soy sauce to taste and/or XO Sauce, Chile Sauce, or Chile-

Black Bean Oil.

*Pickled Shallots*

# PICKLED SHALLOTS

## (YAN QINGCONG)

Most vegetables lose their bright color when dunked in brine for a few days, but shallots buck that trend beautifully. Not only do these midget onions turn a pretty pink hue, but they also get sweet and mild as they pickle, making them a pleasure to slice and toss atop anything from the wok, but also mild enough to meld into leafy salads, sandwiches, chicken or tuna salad, and cold noodle dishes. And with the twist of orange and the booze in this brine, there are certainly cocktail applications to explore here far beyond the scope of Chinese cuisine.

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• TIME: 3 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS •

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13 ounces shallots (enough to fill a 1-pint jar)

3 (1-inch) pieces orange zest

2 tablespoons good-quality Shaoxing wine or gin

¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons distilled white vinegar

1 tablespoon sugar

1 teaspoon kosher salt

About ¼ cup cool water

Bring a medium saucepan of water to a boil. While you're waiting, peel and trim the shallots.

Once the water is at a high boil, blanch the shallots for 2 minutes, until just tender. Drain and rinse well under cool running water to stop the cooking.

Place the orange zest in a clean 1-pint jar. Pack in the shallots and pour in the wine, vinegar, sugar, and salt, then top off the jar with the water as needed to completely cover the shallots.

Cover tightly and shake to combine the ingredients. Let sit on the countertop for 24 hours before refrigerating. The pickles are ready to eat after 3 days. Kept refrigerated, they will keep for at least 6 weeks.

# PRESERVED MUSTARD GREENS

## (XUE CÀI)

This versatile and quintessential Chinese pickle is a delicious and easy way to eat your greens. Stir-fry it simply with pork, garlic, and ginger—done! Throw it into a lamb and noodle soup—yes! Chop it fine into a relish with jalapeño, cilantro, garlic, black sesame oil, and vinegar—amazing! And straight from the jar with chopsticks? You betcha. In every way, it should spark your creativity; it's also a blank canvas onto which one may drizzle Chile-Black Bean Oil or Chile Sauce. This is a Chinese super pickle, and there's nothing it can't do. Note that although flat Chinese mustard greens (if you can find them) are more traditional, the curly variety is more readily available.

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• TIME: 1 TO 3 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS •

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1 pound curly mustard greens

½ cup distilled white vinegar

1 teaspoon kosher salt

4 teaspoons sugar

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. While you're waiting, wash the greens well to rid them of dirt and make the brine by stirring together the vinegar, salt, and sugar in a medium bowl.

Boil the greens for 90 seconds, stirring to promote even cooking. They should take on a bright green color. Drain and immediately rinse under cold running

water to stop the cooking, stirring with your hands to help them cool.

Drain the greens and gather them into small bundles at the stem. Squeeze, squeeze, *squeeze* them with vigor to drain out all of the water and get them as dry as possible. Roll the bundles of greens up in clean kitchen towels to wring out any residual moisture.

Trim the stems, discarding the tough ends. Chop the greens into ½-inch strips and add them to the brine. Using your hands, work the brine into the greens, breaking up any tight clumps of vegetables.

Pack the seasoned greens into a 1-pint jar and cover. Let sit at room temperature for 24 hours before refrigerating. Your pickle is ready to eat, but it will taste even better after 3 days. Refrigerated, it will keep for at least a month.

INSPIRED PICKLES

# FIVE-SPICE PICKLED CARROTS

This recipe scales like a champ—I'm showing you how to make one jar, but it's easy enough to make a dozen (and this is the only recipe in this collection that works for canning). I'm a big fan of the combination of five-spice's warm flavors lightened by fresh lemon juice; try the combination on cooked buttered carrots, and you'll see what I mean. This pickle, while not traditional, is a beautiful and piquant appetizer; or a few spears will snuggle up nicely to your sandwich. Chopped fine, it's also a nice addition to a warm bowl of congee.

• TIME: 3 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS •

12 to 14 ounces carrots

1 small clove garlic, smashed

1 teaspoon five-spice powder

½ teaspoon kosher salt

¼ cup fresh lemon juice (not from Meyer lemons)

2 tablespoons distilled white vinegar

½ cup water

Peel and trim the carrots, then cut them into sticks approximately 4 inches long and ½ inch thick. (If you plan on canning this pickle for shelf storage, sterilize the jars and prepare the lids.)

Place the garlic in a 1-pint canning jar. Then, standing them upright, pack the carrot sticks into the jar as tightly as possible. (If canning, make certain that the carrots aren't any taller than the rim of the jar.)

Meanwhile, in a small saucepan over high heat, combine the five-spice, salt, lemon juice, and vinegar. Stir together and bring the brine to a boil. Immediately pour over the carrots. Then boil the water in the same pot and pour as much of it as necessary over the carrots to fill the jar. (If canning these, leave ¼ inch to ½ inch of headspace at the top.)

Cap and shake the jar gently to combine the ingredients. (If you're canning, process the carrots in a hot-water bath for 15 minutes, let cool, and check for a proper seal.)

Allow the carrots to sit in the brine, refrigerated, for 3 days to develop their flavor, shaking from time to time. They will be delicious for about 3 months. (Canned carrots can be stored on the shelf for up to 1 year, but open jars should be refrigerated.)

*Salt-Cured long Beans with Ginger*

# SALT-CURED LONG BEANS WITH GINGER

It could be that long beans—the long and skinny green beans found in Asian markets—are not available near you, and that's totally fine: straight-up skinny green beans make a fine substitute. However, if you can find long beans, they're a lot of fun in this pickle, with their lighter texture and fresh snap. These preserved beans are in more of a marinade than a brine; thus, instead of a canning jar, I suggest you make them in a shallow, flat food storage container where the beans can lie in a single layer. Snack on these like potato chips, or chop them and either toss with beef or shrimp in a stir-fry or stir into congee.

• TIME: 1 DAY • MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS •

10 ounces long beans, or 12 ounces green beans

3 tablespoons kosher salt

1 (⅔-inch) piece fresh ginger

2 small cloves garlic

2 tablespoons dark brown sugar

¼ cup Japanese soy sauce

Trim the beans, discarding the ends, and chop into 4-inch lengths. If you're using green beans instead of long beans, be sure to cut off both ends of the beans (don't just snap the stem) to allow the flavors to penetrate.

Lay the beans in a single layer in a flat, shallow dish. Cover them with the salt and let them sit for 2 hours, rolling them occasionally. Rinse the beans, discarding any extra salt or residual liquid, and pat them dry with a clean kitchen towel.

Mince the ginger and finely mince the garlic (or press it in a garlic press) and combine them with the sugar and soy sauce in a clean, shallow container with a tight-fitting lid. Add the beans and toss them well to coat. Cover and refrigerate for 24 hours.

Your beans are now ready to eat, though you should stir them before eating. Kept covered in the refrigerator, they will keep for at least 3 weeks.

*Sour Celery and Red Pepper*

# SOUR CELERY AND RED PEPPER

I don’t want to offend anyone with old-fashioned words, but I think of this as a relish tray–ready, 1960s-housewife-style “Oriental Pickle.” It could just be that copious amounts of celery conjure those images for me: the vegetable has been typecast with tuna salad and blue cheese dip for far too long. I think it is a sadly unsung vegetable hero, particularly when peeled. But I promise you that all the tangy, sweet, salty, savory flavors of Chinese food are here, with a refreshing crunch.

• TIME: ABOUT 45 MINUTES • MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS •

1 pound celery, trimmed, leaves removed

2 teaspoons peanut oil

8 ounces red bell peppers, cut into long, thin strips

Pinch of kosher salt

4 teaspoons sugar

½ cup Japanese soy sauce

½ cup distilled white vinegar

⅓ cup cool water

1 teaspoon black sesame oil

Use a vegetable peeler to remove the tough strings from the celery, then slice it at an angle, ¾ inch thick. Transfer to a medium bowl.

Heat the oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add the bell pepper and salt and sauté until the bell pepper softens and blackens in spots, 7 to 8 minutes.

Add the bell pepper to the celery, along with the sugar, soy sauce, vinegar, water, and sesame oil and stir well. Your pickle is ready to eat, but the flavors will become even better if you wait until the next day. To store, place in canning jars or containers with tight-fitting lids and evenly distribute the brine. (Don’t worry if there doesn’t seem to be enough liquid at first; in a day’s time, the liquid level will rise significantly.) Cover and refrigerate; this pickle will keep for at least a month.

*Sichuan Cucumbers with Orange and Almonds*

# SICHUAN CUCUMBERS WITH ORANGE AND ALMONDS

This pickle was inspired by the now-famous chef Danny Bowien of Mission Chinese Food in San Francisco. He does a rocking mixed pickle topped with chunks of ground peanut and enough Sichuan peppercorn to numb your lips. I prefer to keep it all cukes, and I've swapped out the peanuts for almonds, which have a smoother finish. And while the chile and peppercorns are there, you can still get the vegetable, which is enhanced by the orange juice's sweet acidity. Note that this recipe requires a spice grinder or spice-only coffee mill.

• TIME: ABOUT 45 MINUTES • MAKES ABOUT 1¾ CUPS •

1 pound 5 ounces salad cucumbers

1 tablespoon fine sea salt

1½ teaspoons dried chile flakes

1 teaspoon Sichuan peppercorns

15 raw unsalted almonds

1 tablespoon sugar

2 tablespoons fresh orange juice

Peel the cucumbers and trim and discard the ends. Slice them at an angle, ¼ inch thick. Toss them in a colander with the salt and let them rest over a bowl or in the sink for 20 minutes. Once they give up their copious liquid, rinse them briefly and pat them as dry as possible with a clean kitchen towel, then transfer to a medium bowl.

Meanwhile, in a small skillet over high heat, toast the chile flakes and peppercorns for 2 to 3 minutes, until fragrant, then slide into a small bowl to cool. In the same skillet over medium-high heat, toast the almonds, stirring once or twice, until light brown on both sides, about 3 minutes.

In a spice grinder or dedicated coffee mill, grind the spices to a fine powder, then set aside. Grind the almonds finely as well, pulsing them carefully so as not to turn them into nut butter. Add the almonds to the cucumbers, along with the sugar and orange juice. Toss very well to coat evenly. Spread the cucumbers in a shallow dish and sprinkle liberally with the spice powder. Eat immediately, or cover and refrigerate; these will keep for 3 days.

# HONG KONG PICKLED PAPAYA, SHALLOTS, AND CUCUMBER

In one of my zillion expeditions to a certain gigantic Chinese grocery store, I came across a jar of this pickle. It looked as if the pale, limp vegetables inside had been processed to the edge of oblivion. It tasted like it looked—mushy and disintegrating—unsurprising, as it must have come on the slow boat from the Mee Chun Canning Company in Hong Kong. Still, it made me think of green papaya in a whole new way: rather than shredding it and tossing it Thai-style with copious fish sauce and lime, I cubed it and poached it until it became tender but toothsome, kind of like squash. The potent ginger, along with the shallot's bite and the cucumber's coolness, make it a pickle sensation.

• TIME: 3 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 6½ CUPS •

1 pound green papaya

8 ounces shallots

10 ounces salad cucumbers

5 thin slices peeled fresh ginger

1½ cups distilled white vinegar

1½ cups water

1½ teaspoons kosher salt

6 tablespoons sugar

Bring a medium pot of water to a boil. Meanwhile, peel the papaya and discard its seeds. Chop into 1-inch cubes; you should have about 3 cups. Trim and peel the shallots. Peel the cucumber, trim and discard the ends, then cut it in half lengthwise and scrape out the seeds with a teaspoon. Chop the cucumber into 1-inch cubes; you should have about 1¾ cups.

Once the water is boiling, add the papaya and cook, covered, for 5 minutes. Add the shallots and cook for 2 minutes more, until the papaya is just tender. Drain and rinse under cool water to stop the cooking. Combine with the cucumbers and transfer to a 2-quart canning jar or other container (or some combination of smaller jars and containers).

Return the pot to the stove and add the ginger, vinegar, water, salt, and sugar, stirring to combine. Cover, bring to a boil over high heat, and let bubble for 2 minutes. Pour the brine over the vegetables until they are fully covered in liquid and put the lids on the containers.

Let the pickle sit on the countertop for 24 hours before moving to the refrigerator. Let it sit for 3 days for the best flavor. This pickle will keep for at least a month.

# SHANGHAI CABBAGE AND CHILE

There are many reasons to go to San Dong House BBQ on Geary Street in San Francisco. For one thing, there's the heart-pumping *slam*! of fresh noodles pulled to order before your eyes. There are the amazing dan dan noodles, green onion pancake, and dumplings that never disappoint. And then there's the cold dish and pickle bar, ready to serve you the plated nibbles of your choice. I picked up this pickle from them—it's one of my favorites. They laughed when I inquired about the recipe because it really is so simple. However, don't let its simplicity fool you. The result is something far greater than the sum of its parts.

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• TIME: 1 DAY • MAKES ABOUT 6 CUPS •

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1¾ pounds green cabbage

1 tablespoon fine sea salt

15 small dried red chiles peppers

1 tablespoon peanut oil or vegetable oil

2 teaspoons sugar

¾ cup distilled white vinegar

2¼ cups water

Discard the tough outer leaves of the cabbage and, starting from the root end, cut the cabbage in half. Again starting from the root end, cut each section in

half again and trim away the core. Chop the cabbage into 1-inch pieces and place in a large bowl.

Cover the cabbage with the salt and toss with your hands to distribute it evenly. Let sit for about 15 minutes, tossing once after about 7 minutes.

Open the kitchen doors and windows and/or turn on your exhaust fan. In a small skillet over high heat, scorch the chiles until black on one side, then flip them to blacken on the other side, 2 to 3 minutes per side.

Add the chiles, oil, and sugar to the cabbage and thoroughly combine. Pack into a bowl or a jar with a lid. In a pitcher, combine the vinegar and water and pour over the top, pressing down on the cabbage to submerge it completely and discarding any leftover brine.

Cover and refrigerate for 24 hours. This pickle is now ready to eat, and it will keep for about a week in the refrigerator.

# SHAOXING TOFU

Stinky tofu? No thank you. Shaoxing tofu? Yes, please! Preserving tofu in Shaoxing wine gives it a “drunken” alcoholic bite, and also preserves the tofu for refrigerator storage for several months—much longer than simply storing it in water. Much like drunken chicken (poached or steamed chicken cooled and marinated in Shaoxing wine), wine-preserved tofu leads to drunken tofu. Simply pat dry the preserved bean curd and then fry it in oil. It’s delicious as is, or toss it with garlic, Chile-Black Bean Oil, and onion.

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• TIME: 1 WEEK • MAKES ABOUT 1¾ CUPS •

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1 (14-ounce) block of firm tofu

About 1 cup good-quality Shaoxing wine

Drain the tofu and gently press out as much moisture as you can. Wrap the tofu up in two clean kitchen towels and cover with a heavy cookbook (*Mastering the Art of French Cooking* works great!). Let it sit on the countertop for 8 hours to gently press out more moisture.

Cut the pressed tofu into 1-inch cubes and transfer to a glass or ceramic container with a tight lid (plastic will retain odors). Pour in wine to cover by ½ inch. Cover and refrigerate for at least a week. The tofu will keep for at least 3 months submerged in the wine.

SAUCES

# CHILE SAUCE

Yes! Make your own! I love working with Fresno chiles (which look like red jalapeños) because they're readily available and their heat level is a happy medium. When chopping hot peppers for this or any other recipe, I strongly encourage you to take a few precautions: your knife, cutting board, and hands will become covered in capsaicin-laden oil from the peppers, so be sure to wear gloves or scrub your hands thoroughly before touching your eyes, nose, children, or chihuahua. This sauce works great with Radish in Chile Oil, and it's a fine condiment for absolutely anything that needs a little fire.

• TIME: ABOUT 45 MINUTES • MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS •

2 pounds Fresno chiles

1 cup water

3 large cloves garlic

2 tablespoons kosher salt

2 tablespoons sugar

½ cup distilled white vinegar

Wash and stem the peppers. If you'd like your sauce less spicy, cut the peppers in half lengthwise and remove and discard the ribs and seeds.

In a large, heavy Dutch oven with a tight lid, combine the peppers and water and bring to a boil. Note that the water will only cover the bottom of the pot,

and that the peppers should not be piled more than two high. Boil for about 15 minutes, covered, stirring twice to promote even cooking. The peppers should become soft enough to break up with a wooden spoon.

Drain and discard the cooking liquid. In a food processor fitted with the metal blade, mince the garlic until it stops flying around the work bowl. Add the drained peppers, salt, sugar, and vinegar and process until the sauce is quite smooth, about 1 minute. Feel free to taste, but note that the heat and other flavors will tame after refrigeration. If you want to adjust the seasoning, wait until the sauce is thoroughly chilled.

Your chile sauce is ready to eat. Kept refrigerated, it will keep for at least 6 weeks.

*Chile-Black Bean Oil*

# CHILE-BLACK BEAN OIL

Dim sum and dumplings would be stark naked without this important condiment spooned atop their fleshy white exterior. Sure, the fermented black beans could be omitted to make a straight-up chile oil, but why would you want to miss out on all that salty unami flavor and texture? Beyond dumplings, this is also a fine drizzle for roast beef or pork, eggs, or congee—it's basically a rich alternative to hot sauce. Thank you to cooking genius Andrea Nguyen for first introducing me to the concept of making my own chile oil. Couple things here: it's better to use fresh, spicy dried chile flakes; this oil merits purchasing a fresh bottle. And you will need a clip-on candy or frying thermometer to get the heat right on the oil.

• TIME: 3 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS •

2 cups peanut oil

10 small dried red chile peppers

¼ cup dried chile flakes

¾ cup fermented black beans

Clip a candy thermometer onto the side of a small, straight-sided saucepan. Pour in the oil and heat it over high heat until it reaches 235°F.

Carefully remove the thermometer and turn off the heat. Gently add the dried whole chiles, chile flakes, and beans and stir just to combine. That sizzle and aroma are intoxicating! Once the sizzling stops, cover the pot and let it sit until the oil is cool, about 2 hours.

Transfer the oil and all of the solids to a glass jar and cover tightly. Let it sit at room temperature for 3 days to let the flavors infuse.

Your oil is now ready to use. When serving, be sure to eat the solids along with the oil. Store covered in a cool, dark place at room temperature. This oil will keep for at least 6 months. Note that the oil will darken as it ages.

# XO SAUCE

XO sauce—a high-end condiment whose heyday in China was in the 1980s—was popularized for the home cook in *Momofuku* by David Chang and Peter Meehan. No question, this sauce is a splurge on quality ingredients, and its glossy flavor can really transform a dish. When I set out to make my version, I decided that since I didn't trust the unknown quality and origin of store-bought dried shrimp and scallop, I'd desiccate the seafood myself. The process is simple, though somewhat time-consuming, and the results are absolutely exquisite (note that the seafood can be dried and stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator up to a week in advance). Eat this in copious amounts over any cooked vegetable, fried eggs, or stir-fried pork dishes; toss it into noodles like a Chinese Bolognese; or warm it to serve atop a cold pickle.

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• TIME: ABOUT 7 HOURS • MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS •

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6 ounces fresh medium shrimp (about 7 headless before peeling)

6 ounces fresh day boat scallops (about 3)

4 teaspoons kosher salt

4 large cloves garlic, peeled

1 (½-inch) piece peeled fresh ginger

2 serrano chiles, stemmed

4 ounces good-quality prosciutto

1 tablespoon dark brown sugar

1 cup vegetable oil or peanut oil

1 teaspoon Japanese soy sauce

1 teaspoon black sesame oil

Peel the shrimp, discarding their shells.

Using paper towels, blot the shrimp and scallops until dry and tacky. Cut the shrimp in half lengthwise, removing the dark blue vein down the back as you go. Slice the scallops horizontally so each is in 4 thin rounds.

Transfer the seafood to a small bowl and, using your fingers, combine it very thoroughly with the salt.

Lay the sliced and salted seafood in a single layer atop a large, clean kitchen towel and lay another one on top. Cover the top towel with a board and weight which combine to equal about 5 pounds. Let the seafood press at room temperature for 3 hours.

Meanwhile, ready a wire rack over a rimmed baking sheet and cover it with a thin sheen of vegetable oil. As the 3-hour drying period comes to a close, move an oven rack to the lowest position and preheat the oven to 200°F. Lay the pressed seafood on the rack in a single layer.

Place the seafood in the oven and prop the door ajar with the handle of a wooden spoon. Let the seafood dry for 1½ to 2 hours. The edges of the scallops will be slightly brown, and all of the seafood will be dry and leathery, but not stiff.

Now it's time to make the sauce. In a food processor fitted with the metal blade, mince the garlic and ginger. Add the chiles, shrimp, scallops, prosciutto, and sugar and process until very fine, running the machine for 1 to 2 minutes and stopping to scrape down the sides of the work bowl as needed.

Scrape the entire contents of the food processor bowl into a medium skillet, add the vegetable oil, and stir to combine. Place the pan over medium heat, and once the mixture starts to sizzle, lower the heat as needed to keep it bubbling but not splattering. Stir it frequently, scraping up the solids from the

bottom, until the sauce becomes very dark coffee brown all over, 13 to 17 minutes. Take the pan off the heat and stir to cool slightly. Once the bubbles have subsided, add the soy sauce and sesame oil and stir to combine.

The sauce is ready to use right away, though it will become even better after you allow the flavors to meld for a day. Scrape the sauce into a container with a tight-fitting lid and let it sit at room temperature for 24 hours before refrigerating. The sauce will keep for at least 3 months refrigerated.

# INDIA

WHEN AND HOW TO SERVE INDIAN PICKLES AND CHUTNEYS
BASICS OF INDIAN PICKLES AND CHUTNEYS

## PICKLES

SWEET MANGO PICKLE
LIME PICKLE
GREEN MANGO PICKLE
CAULIFLOWER, ONION, AND CARROT MIXED PICKLE
APPLES IN MUSTARD WITH MINT
PANEER-STUFFED PICKLED CHILES
HOT CARROT PICKLE
PICKLED CHICKPEAS

## CHUTNEYS

SOUTH INDIAN COCONUT AND CILANTRO CHUTNEY
FRESH TURMERIC AND GINGER CHUTNEY
PEACH, COCONUT, AND GINGER CHUTNEY
FRIED ONION, GREEN PEPPER, AND RAISIN CHUTNEY
ONION AND CILANTRO CHUTNEY
TOMATO TAMARIND CHUTNEY
SWEET RED PEPPER MURABBA
DRY SESAME CHUTNEY

YOGA, CHESS, THE BEATLES' cosmic conversion, henna tattoos, Bhangra-Indian culture and innovation (as well as Indian food) can be rather polarizing: you either love it or you don't. For me, it's a no-brainer: the ghee-rich, amply spiced curries of North India are the ideal method for vegetable and meat intake and I'd walk a mile for vindaloo (which, by the way, originated as a pickle of pork with spices in mustard oil and palm vinegar).

But the heavy spicing of Indian food in general—and India's preserves in particular—isn't just a matter of taste. With more than 1.2 billion mouths to feed and a blazingly hot climate that can spoil fresh food in a flash, India's cuisines rely on shrewd food preservation, where pickling and spices play a big role. Thus, the humble pickle, paragon of preservation, is an ever-present and indispensible part of the meal.

Few pickles can compare to India's for intensity and richness of flavor. Indian pickles are fermented and vinegared, cooked and raw, spicy and sweet and sour. Fruits and vegetables mingle with mass quantities of aromatic spices, toasted fresh to coax out their full flavor. Oil and coconut make them feel lush.

Up until now, your familiarity with Indian pickles may both begin and end with the British versions—Major Grey's chutney and Branston Pickle (or ploughman's pickle). Both are delicious in their own right (in fact, I even have a recipe for ploughman's pickle in *Can It, Bottle It, Smoke It*). They are a wonderful start to an Indian pickle conversation, but they are by no means the period at the end of its sentence.

I've tried to pack in a wide sampling of flavors and styles from across the subcontinent—a generous tasting plate (better known as a thali) of recipes. Some are found everywhere in India, such as Lime Pickle, Tomato Tamarind Chutney, and Sweet Mango Pickle. Some are regional, like South Indian Coconut and Cilantro Chutney, found in the south and the west, and Sweet Red Pepper Murabba, a style of preparation most popular in the north.

## SPICE ESSENTIALS

While most of the ingredients in this book can be found just about anywhere, many of the spices will not be found at your local grocery. Believe me, I wouldn't ask you to make any special purchases unless it was absolutely necessary, but Indian spices are so central to these recipes that they simply have no substitutes. If you have an Indian grocer near you, you're in luck—and a

high volume market means fresh spices. If not, online sources such as iShopIndian.com, IndianFoodsCo.com, or Amazon.com make it quick and easy to pack the pantry.

## WHEN AND HOW TO SERVE INDIAN PICKLES AND CHUTNEYS

In India, the main meal of the day is usually lunch (except in the south, where breakfast is the biggest meal), and there's a smaller dinner and a fourth, small meal: tea. Condiment aficionados will be cheered by the vast amount of plate space dedicated to pickles and chutneys at every meal—a meal is considered bland and boring without them.

A typical thali (this is the name for both the large metallic serving plate for serious dining and the meal that is served on it) has several components that, while always present, vary by region, custom, and preference. In the simplified way we think of a classic American plate as meat, potatoes, and a vegetable side dish, the typical Indian thali consists of rice and a meat or vegetable curry as a main dish and small side dishes of dal, bread (like papadam or naan), pickles and/or chutney, and a raita or pachadi (condiments with thick yogurt, toasted spices, and fresh vegetables such as cucumber and red onion). Each dish (except the bread) is served in its own tiny metal bowl, called a katori, clustered around the thali. Presented together, it makes the plate look quite royal.

Let's home in on those pickles, shall we? A wedge of lemon or lime pickle is meant, like most pickles, to revitalize flavors and wake up sluggish taste buds. They are intensely sour, and these bites add nice contrast to what can often be heavy, ghee- or coconut-laden curries. A good Indian pickle should balance out the meal—if your main is spicy, serve a sweet pickle. If it's mild, let its accompanying chutney ply your mouth with something wild.

In the south, chutneys are not just side dishes, but are served in almost equal proportion to the potato, vegetable, or (usually) cheese-stuffed dosa or uttapam (both types of savory Indian pancakes). Along with a bowl of sambar (the richly spiced tomato and vegetable soup and condiment ever-present in a southern meal), the chutneys stand by in vast quantities for some intensive dunking and, if you're like me by meal's end, spooning.

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PICKLE AND A CHUTNEY?

Thanks for asking! Short answer: It's not entirely clear. Long answer: An Indian "pickle" often implies that the preserve has to sit for a long period, either to ferment or simply to meld flavors and/or textures. Traditionally, a pickle is often cured in oil—usually mustard oil. Chutneys, by contrast, are often made fresh to be eaten straight away. But both pickles and chutneys can be either fresh or cooked, though the term *chutney* can also apply to a dried spice mixture, such as Dry Sesame Chutney, or a fresh puree, such as South Indian Coconut and Cilantro Chutney or Tomato Tamarind Chutney. In general, pickles tend to store longer, while some of the chutney recipes don't keep for more than a day or two.

Since we're chatting about semantics, it's worth mentioning that Indians also enjoy sweet preserves, either spoonable or bite-size, made from gooseberries most commonly, but also mangos, carrots, potatoes, dates, and other vegetables and fruits, such as the Sweet Red Pepper Murabba.

# BASICS OF INDIAN PICKLES AND CHUTNEYS

Distinctive, luxurious, and velvety, the flavors of Indian pickles are unmistakable. While not always spicy hot, they are almost always heavily spiced. In addition, they have in common:

- **LONG LISTS OF INGREDIENTS.** At a quick glance, an Indian pickle may feel daunting to make because of the space that its ingredients take up on a page. But I beg you to look at that recipe again: the main ingredients and preparation are usually minimal, and the brine comes together in a snap. All that ink is spent on a long list of spices, and it really won't be so taxing to measure them all out by the teaspoonful. One purchase from an Indian grocer, either in your town or online, and you'll have all the spices you need to make pickles for months.

- **LOTS OF OIL CURING.** Indian pickles often rely on a good amount of either mustard oil or vegetable oil. A neutral oil, like canola or corn, will work very nicely, but one with its own flavor, such as olive oil, should not be used. Oil is a great medium for pickling because it keeps air away from the vegetables, preserving them beautifully. Mustard oil in particular is believed to have antimicrobial qualities that aid in long-term food storage in intensely hot conditions—perfect for its native land. Their heavy fat content makes the pickles filling and decadent. And the residual "brine" in the bottle after the pickles are gone—oil, spices, and extruded liquid from the vegetables or fruits—is delicious for marinades, salad dressings, or cooking sauces. While oil is the most traditional medium for a brine, vinegar and citrus juices are also commonly used in conjunction with oil or on their own.

- **SUN CURING.** Exposing oil-cured, vinegared, or citrus-cured vegetables and fruits to the sun for days or weeks is common practice in Indian pickle making. This is fine in a country where it can reach 110 degrees in the shade and, presumably, the intense ambient heat keeps the food from

spoiling. Strong sunlight also allows for the flavors to meld and for the vegetables and spices to ferment slowly, bringing a unique pungency to the pickle. But many of us don't have the sun turned up quite so strongly, so we put our oil-soaked food in the refrigerator for long-term storage as the USDA mandates, keeping it out of the microbe-building temperature danger zone of 40 to 140°F.

- **TOASTED SPICES.** This technique yields such excellent results that I use it not only for the spices in Indian pickles and curries, but for many other pickles or savory dishes I make. Great Indian pickles start with your skillet. Do not skip this step! Imagine the difference in flavor between a store-bought English muffin right from the bag (blech!) and a toasted English muffin ready for your butter (yum!). Heating the spices that you add to your pickles (either by dry toasting or frying them in the oil for the brine) makes a full-flavored world of difference. And yes, you'll have another pan to wash, but it is entirely worth it.

PICKLES

# SWEET MANGO PICKLE

If non-Indians have but one Indian pickle in their pantry, this is it—either homemade (if your mom or grandmother was of British descent) or sold under the name Major Grey's. This recipe yields a heckuvallotta pickle and for good reason: you will want to gobble it in quantity and/or share. This is the quintessential Indian pickle—sweet, spicy, heavily aromatic, and made rich and lusty with oil. Eat this from a small bowl, next to your spicy fish curry or alongside a roasted leg of lamb.

• TIME: 20 MINUTES TO 1 DAY • MAKES ABOUT 7 CUPS •

2 large mangos

2 serrano chiles, stemmed

1 small yellow onion

¼ cup mustard oil or vegetable oil

2 tablespoons cumin seeds

1 tablespoon fenugreek seeds

1 tablespoon dried chile flakes

1 cup raisins

1 (3-inch) piece peeled fresh ginger, minced

1 rounded tablespoon kosher salt

1 tablespoon asafetida

2 teaspoons ground turmeric

¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon light brown sugar

½ cup distilled white vinegar

Wash and dry the mangos, then cut them into ½-inch cubes; do not peel them. You should have about 5 cups of fruit. Chop the chiles, discarding the seeds and membranes if you'd like your pickle less hot. Chop the onion into ¼-inch cubes.

In a large skillet set over medium heat, combine the oil, cumin seeds, fenugreek seeds, and chile flakes and cook, stirring frequently, until quite brown and fragrant, about 5 minutes. Add the mangos, onion, raisins, ginger, and fresh chile and cook, stirring frequently, until they all start to soften, about 5 minutes more. Turn off the heat and add the salt, asafetida, turmeric, sugar, and vinegar. Stir to thoroughly combine.

Pack the pickle into glass or ceramic containers with lids (plastic will take on the pickle's color and odor). You can eat this pickle right away, but it is better if it's left to sit on the countertop for 24 hours. After that, refrigerate the pickle; it will keep for at least 2 months.

# LIME PICKLE

Many Indian pickles exhibit an intensity of sourness that is a taste-bud bender for Western palates. And this essential cleansing pickle, which plays off every curry, rice, bread, and vegetable dish on the table, is one of the sourest of them all. I like to use a blend of Persian limes (think just regular ol' limes) combined with tiny Key limes, which have nice vanilla and sweet notes along with the sour—together they are a winning team. Think about taking an intense bite of watermelon or tucking into sharp pickled ginger. This is a reset button for your mouth; a lion of lime tamed by warm spices, heat, and sweet.

• TIME: 12 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS •

2 Persian limes

7 Key limes

2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon vegetable oil

3 tablespoons kosher salt

2 tablespoons mustard oil or vegetable oil

4 teaspoons ground cayenne pepper

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

2 teaspoons asafetida

2 teaspoons ground coriander seeds

2 teaspoons black mustard seeds

2 teaspoons yellow mustard seeds

3 tablespoons light brown sugar

Wash the limes and dry them well. In a medium skillet, heat the 1 teaspoon of vegetable oil over medium heat. Add the whole limes and sear their skins, rolling them around in the pan for even cooking, for 5 minutes. It's okay if the limes get brown in spots.

Transfer the cooked limes to a clean kitchen towel and let them sit until they're cool enough to handle. Use the towel to rub off the oil from the skin (or else they will be slippery under the knife). Chop the limes into small pieces: 16 pieces for each Persian lime and 8 pieces for each Key lime. Transfer the cut limes, along with the kosher salt, to a 1-quart jar (or some other transparent container with a good lid). Shake the jar to evenly distribute the salt over the limes. Place the jar, covered, in a sunny window and let it sit for 4 days. Shake the limes daily to redistribute the salt. It's normal for some thick juice to leach from the fruit.

In a medium skillet, combine the 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil and the mustard oil with the cayenne, turmeric, asafetida, and coriander seeds and stir over medium heat for 3 minutes, until fragrant. Add the black and yellow mustard seeds and, stirring constantly, cook for about 1 minute more, until the seeds begin to pop. Turn off the heat. Scrape the limes and all of their juices from the jar into the pan. Add the sugar and mix very thoroughly.

Pack the lime pickle into the jar, cover, and let sit at room temperature for 24 hours. Refrigerate for 1 week before eating, shaking the jar's contents every other day. Stored in the refrigerator, your lime pickle will keep for at least a year.

## A NOTE ABOUT CAYENNE PEPPER

Dried and ground cayenne pepper can vary widely in taste and heat, depending on the peppers themselves

and also the age of the product. I strongly suggest tasting a tiny bit of the powder before using to adjust the heat level to your taste buds.

*Green Mango Pickle*

# GREEN MANGO PICKLE

Unripened mangos, like unripened papayas, make for fine puckery pickles. And unlike the Sweet Mango Pickle, which eats like a dessert, this delivers loads of flavor and spice with just a little sugar for balance, and the texture of the mango is yielding and squashlike. Leaving the mango skin on helps give this a nice bitter bite, and the spices complement one another beautifully. Dollop beside your dal to boost its flavor and add texture.

• TIME: 1 DAY • MAKES ABOUT 2¼ CUPS •

1 large mango (about 14 ounces)

¼ cup mustard oil or vegetable oil

1 tablespoon cumin seeds

1 tablespoon chile powder

2 teaspoons fenugreek seeds

3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced

2 teaspoons kosher salt

2 teaspoons asafetida

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

2 tablespoons light brown sugar

¼ cup distilled white vinegar

Wash and dry the mango, then cut it into ½-inch cubes; do not peel it. You should have about 3 cups of fruit.

Combine the mustard oil, cumin seeds, chile powder, fenugreek seeds, and garlic in a medium skillet and cook over medium heat, stirring often, until the spices become fragrant and the garlic browns, about 4 minutes. Add the mango, stir to combine, and cook for an additional 3 minutes, until slightly soft.

Turn off the heat and add the salt, asafetida, turmeric, sugar, and vinegar. Combine thoroughly. Pack the pickle into glass or ceramic jars or containers with tight lids (avoid plastic, as it will retain this pickle's color and strong perfume).

This pickle can be eaten immediately, but it is better if you allow it to sit at room temperature for 24 hours. Refrigerated, this pickle will keep for at least 4 months.

# CAULIFLOWER, ONION, AND CARROT MIXED PICKLE

Unlike many pickles of Indian origin that necessitate a fork or spoon for their relishlike consistency, this one is really more of a traditional hand pickle: just dip your paw in the jar and grab from the brine. While this chunky pickle, packed with flavor, will be happy snuggled up to your homemade chicken curry, it will also feel welcome saddled beside your chicken salad sandwich, too. Don't let the long ingredient list put fear into you—this is easy to make and even easier to eat.

• TIME: 4 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 8 CUPS •

12 ounces cauliflower

10 ounces carrots

6 ounces red onion

¼ cup tamarind concentrate

2¼ cup water

1 tablespoon light brown sugar

2 teaspoons kosher salt

1¼ cups distilled white vinegar

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

2 tablespoons mustard oil or vegetable oil

1 tablespoon cumin seeds

2 teaspoons fennel seeds

2 teaspoons black peppercorns

1 teaspoon fenugreek seeds

1 teaspoon coriander seeds

Set a large pot of water on to boil. Meanwhile, use your hands to break the cauliflower into medium florets of equal size. Peel, trim, and cut the carrots into 2-inch sticks. Cut the onion into long strips ½ inch thick. Once the water is boiling rapidly, add the carrots and the cauliflower and boil for 2 minutes. Add the onion and boil for 1 minute more. Drain all of the vegetables and run under cold water, tossing with your hands to cool more quickly and stop the cooking. Let the vegetables drain while you prepare the brine.

In a pitcher or measuring cup with a spout, combine the tamarind concentrate and 1 cup of the water and stir until the concentrate dissolves. Add the sugar, salt, vinegar, and remaining 1¼ cups water and stir until the sugar and salt dissolve.

In a small skillet, combine the vegetable oil and mustard oil with the cumin seeds, fennel seeds, peppercorns, fenugreek seeds, and coriander seeds. Set over medium heat, and toast, stirring constantly, for 3 minutes, until the spices become lightly browned and aromatic. Let this spice mixture cool slightly, then scrape it into the pitcher with the brine, stirring to combine.

Pack the vegetables tightly into a 2-quart jar or other glass or ceramic container with a lid (plastic will retain the odor of the pickle). Pour the seasoned brine over the vegetables to cover completely.

Secure the container's lid and allow to sit at room temperature for 24 hours, then refrigerate another 3 days before eating. Kept refrigerated, this pickle will keep for at least 2 months.

*Apples in Mustard with Mint*

# APPLES IN MUSTARD WITH MINT

I am a huge fan of Preeti Mistry. I suppose I'm duty-bound to introduce her as a former *Top Chef* contestant, but she just slumps her shoulders at the appellation. She really shines as the culinary mastermind behind Juhu Beach Club, a haven of Indian street food and comfort food in Oakland, California. She makes some outstanding Indian pickles at her place, including the inspiration for this one, which was the first I'd tasted that combined tart green apples and mustard with Indian flavors—like Mumbai by way of the American South. I am stealing her idea and making it my own by thickening up the mustard and adding flecks of mint.

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• TIME: 1 DAY • MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS •

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½ cup apple juice or other light-colored sweet fruit juice

½ cup distilled white vinegar

½ teaspoon ground turmeric

2 tablespoons yellow mustard powder

1 tablespoon yellow mustard seeds

1 teaspoon kosher salt

2 tablespoons mustard oil or vegetable oil

1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon all-purpose flour

11 ounces tart green apples, such as Granny Smith

⅔ cup fresh mint leaves

In a small bowl or measuring cup, whisk together the apple juice, vinegar, turmeric, mustard powder, mustard seeds, and salt to combine.

In a small saucepan, combine the oil with the flour and set over medium heat. Whisk constantly, cooking the flour for 3 to 4 minutes until it bubbles and darkens to a nice chestnut brown. Carefully and slowly stream in the apple juice mixture (be careful, as it will splatter at first), whisking constantly, until the mixture begins to thicken somewhat, about 3 minutes. Turn off the heat.

Cut the apples into 16 half-moons and then chop each moon into about 8 pieces, each with a little piece of skin attached. Chop the mint finely. Combine the apple, mint, and apple juice mixture in a medium bowl.

Pack the pickle into two 1-pint jars. This pickle should sit and mellow for at least 24 hours. Covered and refrigerated, it will keep for 3 weeks.

*Paneer-Stuffed Pickled Chiles*

# PANEER-STUFFED PICKLED CHILES

I am no stranger to spicy food, but I once ate one of these that was so hot I had to lie down. Why? Because I was being macho and I didn't remove the seeds and membranes from the peppers. I have also, of course, eaten many that were just the right degree of spiciness. No matter what happens with the heat, you will deeply enjoy the sweet (dates), pungent (onion), and bracing (vinegar/ginger) aspects of these perfectly peppery pickle bites. Oh, and if Indian paneer cheese is not available, you can make do with another very mild, low-salt milk cheese like queso fresco, haloumi, or a firm quark.

• TIME: 6 DAYS • MAKES 8 TO 10 STUFFED PEPPERS •

4 or 5 jalapeño chiles

4 or 5 Fresno chiles

⅓ cup finely chopped yellow onion (about ½ small yellow onion)

⅓ cup minced cilantro

3 ounces paneer, finely diced

5 dates, pitted and finely chopped

1 teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon ground fenugreek

¾ cup distilled white vinegar

1¼ cups water

2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon sugar

3 thin slices fresh ginger

1 large clove garlic, smashed

Bring a small saucepan of water to a boil. Use scissors or kitchen shears to cut the stems off the peppers, leaving the peppers intact.

When the water is at a rapid boil, slip in the peppers and cook for 5 to 7 minutes, until soft enough to be malleable. Drain and rinse under cold water to stop the cooking.

While the peppers cool, combine the onion, cilantro, paneer, dates, salt, and fenugreek in a medium bowl. This is your stuffing.

Now it's time to stuff the peppers. Using a paring knife, start at the stem end of a pepper and make a long slit, lengthwise, down almost to the pepper's tip. Pinch the pepper together like a change purse to open up the incision you just made. Unless you truly enjoy extremely spicy food, I suggest you use a spoon to gently scrape out as many of the seeds and membranes as you can, leaving the pepper intact. Follow suit with the remaining peppers.

Stuff the peppers with the stuffing until you can't fit anymore inside without splitting the pepper. Lay the peppers on their sides, cut side up, in a shallow container with a well-fitting lid that is just big enough for all.

To make the brine, combine the vinegar, water, sugar, ginger, and garlic in a small covered saucepan over high heat. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat and simmer for 15 minutes. Pour the hot brine, complete with the ginger and garlic, over the peppers to cover them completely. (If your storage container is rather large and you need more liquid to cover the peppers fully, you can double the quantity of brine.) Secure the container with a lid and let sit at room temperature for 24 hours. Move the peppers to the refrigerator and let them sit for 5 days. Serve the peppers whole or carefully sliced into bites. Kept refrigerated, these peppers will keep for 2 weeks.

# HOT CARROT PICKLE

While easy to prepare, this pickle requires a bit of delayed gratification—but it's all for a good cause. Its toothsome texture and fine flavor offer a lot to any thali, and its bright colors certainly pop on the plate. While in India this pickle would traditionally be left in the sun to cure, I let these carrots sit and get delicious in the food-safe confines of the refrigerator to avoid harmful cooties. Sure, it takes longer for the pickle to transform, but for this flavor—which is delicious and not as hot as you might think—it's totally worth the wait.

• TIME: ABOUT 5 WEEKS • MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS •

9 ounces carrots

1 large jalapeño chile, stemmed

2 tablespoons distilled white vinegar

1 teaspoon asafetida

1 teaspoon kosher salt

½ teaspoon chile powder

½ cup mustard oil, or vegetable oil

¼ cup vegetable oil

1 tablespoon fenugreek seeds

1 tablespoon dried chile flakes

Bring a medium saucepan of water to a boil. Peel and trim the carrots, then cut them into 1-inch sticks that are ⅓ inch thick. You should have about 1¾

cups of carrots, enough to almost fill a 1-pint jar. Thinly slice the jalapeño into a medium bowl and add the vinegar.

Once the water is boiling rapidly, cook the carrots for 2 minutes, just until slightly tender. Drain the carrots, run them under cold water, and toss with your hands to stop the cooking. Let the carrots drain, then add them to the jalapeños. Stir in the asafetida, salt, and chile powder.

In a small skillet over medium heat, combine the mustard oil and vegetable oil with the fenugreek seeds and chile flakes, and toast, stirring continuously, for 3 minutes, until lightly browned and fragrant. Let cool slightly, and then add to the carrots.

Toss all the ingredients well, then pack the pickle into a covered 1-pint jar. Let it sit at room temperature for 24 hours, then refrigerate; your pickle will take on its full flavor in about 5 weeks. Refrigerated, it will keep for at least 6 months.

# PICKLED CHICKPEAS

When it comes to pickles, I deeply encourage you to think beyond vegetables and fruit. Think legumes. And here, think of this as an Indian version of a incorrigibly delicious and lemony three-bean salad (okay, it's made with just one legume, but you get my drift). The chickpeas are kept firm and toothsome, and this pickle has a nice chewy texture from the many spices and seeds mixed into the brine—these are meant to be eaten. Eat this pickle straight up or sprinkled on a green salad, or let it add flair to your favorite pasta, rice, quinoa, or other cold grain salads for a picnic.

• TIME: 2 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS •

1½ cups dried chickpeas

½ cup fresh lemon juice

1¼ cups distilled white vinegar

1¼ cups water

3 large cloves garlic, halved lengthwise

1 serrano chile, stemmed and thinly sliced

1½ teaspoons kosher salt

1 (2-inch) stick of cinnamon

1 tablespoon black peppercorns

3 cardamom pods, cracked

1 tablespoon cumin seeds

1 teaspoon fennel seeds

1 tablespoon fenugreek seeds

1 tablespoon coriander seeds

In a large Dutch oven, cover the chickpeas with water by at least 4 inches. Cover and bring to a boil, then continue to boil for 1 hour. Turn off the heat and let the chickpeas sit, covered, in the residual heat for another 30 minutes. Taste the chickpeas: you want them to be cooked through, but firm. Drain them, rinse them under fresh water, and drain again. You will have about 4 cups of cooked chickpeas.

Transfer the chickpeas to a 2-quart jar or container. Add the lemon juice, vinegar, water, garlic, chile, salt, cinnamon, peppercorns, and cardamom pods.

In a small dry skillet, toast the cumin, fennel, fenugreek, and coriander seeds over medium heat for about 2 minutes, stirring frequently; the seeds will brown lightly and become fragrant. Add these to the chickpeas as well.

Stir everything to combine; note that the chickpeas will absorb some of the brine (so don't worry if it looks like a lot of liquid at first). Allow the pickle to sit at room temperature for 24 hours before refrigerating. It's ready to eat the following day, and will keep refrigerated for at least 2 months.

## HOW TO CRACK CARDAMOM PODS (AND MAKE CARDAMOM TEA)

Do you hear your mother's voice in your head telling you, "Don't use your teeth as tools!"? Ignore it! Your teeth are the best tool for this job. A quick, snapping bite between your pearly whites will split the outer shell of the pod and allow the flavor of the inner seed to seep into your dish. If you have cardamom, you also have all that

you need for exquisite tea. Crunch about 6 pods between your teeth and put them in a mug. Fill it halfway with boiling water and let it steep for 4 minutes. Fill the cup with hot water, stir, and drink.

CHUTNEYS

# SOUTH INDIAN COCONUT AND CILANTRO CHUTNEY

In South Indian cuisine (the land of dosas and the mind-numbingly good chicken Kerala), coconut is king. The highlight is this particular green coconut chutney—so good that I am happy to eat it on its own over rice. Note that this is a little thicker than most, so feel free to add a bit more water if you prefer a thinner consistency. A food processor is critical here. And make certain that you're using only coconut without added sugar.

• TIME: ABOUT 15 MINUTES • MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP •

1⅓ cups unsweetened flaked coconut (see opposite)

1 small serrano chile, stemmed

¼ cup fresh mint leaves

¼ cup cilantro leaves

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

¾ teaspoon kosher salt

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1 tablespoon cumin seeds

About ½ cup cool water

In the bowl of a food processor, combine the coconut, chile, mint, cilantro, lemon juice, and salt and process for about 3 minutes, scraping down the sides as needed, until the mixture is a course puree.

In a small skillet over medium heat, combine the oil and the cumin seeds and cook, stirring frequently, until the seeds become brown and fragrant, about 3 minutes. With the food processor running, stream the oil and cumin seeds into the chutney. Process to incorporate fully, scraping down the sides as needed.

Gently stream in about ¼ cup of the water with the machine running, then test the chutney for consistency. It should be thick but able to cling to dipped food. If it's too thick, add more water, about a tablespoon at a time, until it reaches your desired consistency.

Serve immediately. Unused portions can be refrigerated for up to 2 days.

## HOW TO SHAVE FRESH COCONUT

Unsweetened coconut flakes are increasingly available in health food stores and supermarkets; this is a very wonderful thing indeed, as the quality is often very good. But there's still nothing like the flavor of freshly shaved coconut, and overachievers may wish to roast and shave their own. It all starts with a whole, fresh, mature coconut (not the green ones with the sides hacked away, but the brown orbs with the shaggy exterior).

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Drain the coconut's water. Find the nut's "eyes": the small brown circles near the top. With a hammer and a screw or nail, bang holes into two of the eyes (you need two holes to let the air in so the water can flow out more easily). Pour the coconut

water directly into a drinking glass and refresh yourself; wielding a hammer is hard work.

Wrap the coconut tightly in aluminum foil and bake for 30 minutes. When it’s cool enough to handle, tap it with a hammer to break the shell. Peel off the foil and use a butter knife to separate the coconut meat from its hard outer casing. Shave the coconut into thin, wide strips in a food processor or on a mandoline. You can use it right away, or it can be stored in an airtight zip-top bag in the refrigerator up to 5 days.

# FRESH TURMERIC AND GINGER CHUTNEY

Wow! Bam! Pop! This pungent and spicy chutney is explosive by any measure—flavor, intensity, visual vibrancy. I am totally addicted to eating it by the tiny, tiny spoonful. I know that fresh turmeric can be difficult to find (in San Francisco, I can usually find it at both Whole Foods and independent Asian grocery stores). Unfortunately, there is no adequate substitute. But if you can find it, hooray! You can make this stuff. Be careful, though. Turmeric is one of the most staining substances in the kitchen, worse than beets. Don't wear your favorite apron, and wearing gloves or plastic bags on your hands while you handle the root will prevent a lot of explaining later. (Pictured here.)

• TIME: ABOUT 20 MINUTES • MAKES ABOUT ½ CUP •

2 ounces (4 to 5 medium rhizomes) fresh turmeric

½ ounce fresh ginger (about a 1-inch chunk)

2 small cloves garlic

1 small serrano chile, stemmed

¼ cup fresh lemon juice

½ teaspoon kosher salt

½ teaspoon asafetida

Peel both the turmeric and the ginger and mince them very fine; transfer to a small bowl. Mince the garlic and chile and add them to the bowl along with the lemon juice, salt, and asafetida. Mix to combine.

This incredibly pungent condiment is ready to eat immediately, but it is even better the next day. Covered and refrigerated, this chutney will keep for at least a month.

*Peach, Coconut, and Ginger Chutney*

# PEACH, COCONUT, AND GINGER CHUTNEY

If you don't like it hot, then this chutney is for you. Start with ripe, firm fruit; soft and juicy is great for eating out of hand, but it will turn your chutney to mush. Can't get hold of peaches? Other summer stone fruit, such as nectarines or plums, can easily be swapped in. I love the meeting of salt and fruit, and for this fruit-forward condiment I like to tame the sweetness with a generous salt wallop. It may be too much for you, so adjust your own saline-o-meter accordingly. (Pictured here.)

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• TIME: ABOUT 10 MINUTES • MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS •

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9 ounces peaches

⅓ cup unsweetened flaked coconut, store-bought or homemade

1 to 1½ teaspoons kosher salt

1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger

¼ teaspoon chile powder

½ teaspoon distilled white vinegar

With a very sharp knife, chop the peaches very small: first into 16 half-moons, then each half moon into 6 to 8 pieces, each with a piece of skin attached.

In a small bowl, combine the peaches with the coconut, salt, ginger, chile powder, and vinegar. Stir to combine.

Serve and eat immediately. Unused portions can be refrigerated for 2 days.

# FRIED ONION, GREEN PEPPER, AND RAISIN CHUTNEY

You know in cartoons when characters get a whiff of something so delicious, their eyes close in bliss and they float in the air and follow the smell, even if it means falling off a cliff or something? That's how I feel about fried onions—their alluring aroma makes this chutney irresistible to me. And not just me: pungent and pleasing without being fiery, this one is a crowd-pleaser, appealing even to those who swear they abhor green bell peppers. It's quick to assemble and very flavorful. You will fall in love with it alongside curry (of course) but also on a burger, in a grilled cheese sandwich, or filling an omelet.

• TIME: ABOUT 25 MINUTES • MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS •

¼ cup vegetable oil

7 ounces yellow onion, diced

1 teaspoon kosher salt

½ teaspoon ground turmeric

1 teaspoon ground cumin

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

½ teaspoon ground fenugreek

¼ teaspoon ground cardamom

½ teaspoon chile powder

6 ounces green bell pepper, diced

¼ cup raisins

Prepare and measure out all the ingredients and have them standing by.

Heat the oil in a skillet over medium-high heat, then add the onion and salt and cook, stirring constantly, until very brown, about 10 minutes. Add the turmeric, cumin, cinnamon, fenugreek, cardamom, and chile powder. Stir for 1 minute. Turn off the heat and add the bell pepper and raisins; stir to coat completely, and let sit in the pan's residual heat for another 3 minutes.

This chutney is ready to eat. Unused portions can be refrigerated for 1 week.

# ONION AND CILANTRO CHUTNEY

This simple, refreshing chutney takes its flavor from a mellowed onion, but by all means feel free to skip the step of blanching it if you like more of a raw bite. The lime and the cilantro make it bright and as pleasing to the eye as it is to your stomach. And versatile? Uh-huh. Its subtle seasoning makes it equally at home with roast chicken and potatoes as with vindaloo and rice.

• TIME: ABOUT 15 MINUTES • MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS •

6 ounces red onion

½ cup cilantro leaves

1 teaspoon kosher salt

3 tablespoons fresh lime juice

1 teaspoon vegetable oil

1½ teaspoons ground cumin

Bring a small pot of water to a boil while you slice the onion into ¼-inch-thick strips.

Blanch the onion by boiling it for 20 seconds, then immediately drain and run under cold water, tossing it with your hands to cool it down and stop the cooking. Drain thoroughly and transfer to a small bowl. Add the cilantro, salt, and lime juice.

In a small skillet over medium heat, combine the oil with the cumin and cook, stirring constantly, until the mixture turns medium brown and becomes fragrant, about 3 minutes. Let it cool slightly, then scrape the oil and cumin into the bowl.

Toss completely and serve immediately. Cover and refrigerate any unused portion. This chutney will keep for up to 3 days.

Clockwise from top right: *Peach, Coconut, and Ginger Chutney*, *Onion and Cilantro Chutney*, *Fresh Turmeric and Ginger Chutney*

# TOMATO TAMARIND CHUTNEY

This is a thin sauce for dipping your papadam into or drizzling onto your tandoori-style chicken; or use it anywhere you would reach for ketchup or steak sauce. Sweet tomatoes and tart coriander bring a nice zing to rich lamb curry, and the pucker of the tamarind cuts through the richness of a simple slab of warmed paneer. Take care that the kalonji seeds do not overcook and become bitter.

• TIME: ABOUT 20 MINUTES • MAKES ABOUT 1¾ CUPS •

11 ounces red slicer tomatoes

1½ teaspoons fine sea salt

1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon mustard oil or vegetable oil

1 tablespoon coriander seeds

1 teaspoon ajwain seeds

½ teaspoon kalonji seeds

3 tablespoons tamarind concentrate

Wash, dry, and coarsely chop the tomatoes, then put them in a food processor or blender. Sprinkle them with the salt. Let them sit and release some of their juice.

Combine the oil with the coriander and ajwain seeds in a small skillet; have the kalonji seeds measured out and ready to go. Heat the pan over medium heat for 2 minutes, stirring continuously; the seeds will just start to brown. Add the kalonji seeds and, stirring constantly, cook all of the spices for 1

minute more, until fragrant. Remove from the heat immediately and scrape the seeds and oil into the food processor on top of the tomatoes. Add the tamarind as well.

Blend for 4 full minutes, scraping down the sides as needed, until the chutney becomes a smooth, thick sauce, pourable but able to cling to a spoon.

Transfer the chutney to either a glass or ceramic container with a lid or a pouring bottle. This is ready to use right away, but it will be even better after 1 day. Let it sit at room temperature for 24 hours before storing, covered, in the refrigerator, where it will keep for at least a month.

# SWEET RED PEPPER MURABBA

At the intersection of jam and candied fruit (or vegetables) lives murabba, a Pakistani and North Indian preserve with an Arabic name. In India, murraba is commonly made with Indian gooseberries, carrots, dates, and mangos, and also pumpkins and potatoes. Just about anything can be cured in a heavy syrup spritzed with lemon juice and (often) accented with cardamom, saffron, or rose water. The result is a sweet bite that, traditionally, one offers to refresh and nourish visiting guests. However, in your fridge or mine, it's also delicious on top of ice cream, cake, or toast.

• TIME: 1 DAY • MAKES ABOUT 1¼ CUPS •

12 ounces red bell peppers

⅔ cup sugar

⅔ cup water

⅛ teaspoon kosher salt

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

¼ teaspoon ground cardamom

Wash and dry the peppers, then cut each lengthwise into eighths, then cut each eighth into thirds (so you'll have 24 bite-size pieces from each pepper).

In a medium saucepan, combine the peppers with the sugar, water, and salt. Bring to a boil, covered, and then lower the heat and gently simmer until the peppers are tender, about 15 minutes. With a slotted spoon, transfer the

peppers to a canning jar or other glass or ceramic container with a tight-fitting lid. With the pot uncovered, turn the heat up to high and let the brine reduce for about 5 minutes. Turn off the heat and stir in the lemon juice and cardamom.

Pour the brine over the top of the peppers to cover. Screw on the lid and let sit at room temperature for 24 hours before refrigerating. The murabba is then ready to eat, but it's even better after 2 days. This murabba will keep in the refrigerator for at least a month.

# DRY SESAME CHUTNEY

Need a curry accompaniment, a fast hostess gift, or a quick potluck schmear? You can have it all in about 10 minutes. When we think of chutneys, we often overlook a quickly assembled, flavor-boosting seed and spice mélange like this. Not only is it delicious, but it's shelf stable, exotic yet approachable, and ready to eat. Sprinkle it on your curry to add flavor or texture, or on plain rice like a Japanese furikake. Better still: fold it into cream cheese to make crackers sing, or stir it into thick yogurt with thinly sliced cucumber and red onion for a raita you'll crave.

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• TIME: ABOUT 10 MINUTES • MAKES ABOUT ½ CUP •

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2 tablespoons unsweetened flaked coconut

1 tablespoon cumin seeds

1 teaspoon fennel seeds

1 teaspoon dried chile flakes

1 tablespoon coriander seeds

1 teaspoon ajwain seeds

¼ cup black sesame seeds

⅛ teaspoon Maldon sea salt

Measure everything out and have it at the ready, including a small bowl to receive the chutney. This recipe is going to cook up fast!

In a dry medium skillet over medium heat, toast the coconut, stirring constantly, for 1 minute. Add the cumin seeds, fennel seeds, chile flakes,

coriander seeds, and ajwain seeds and toast for 3 minutes more, continuing to stir. Everything should become quite fragrant and lightly browned.

Add the sesame seeds and cook, continuing to stir, for 20 to 30 seconds more—just until you hear the first *pop*. Immediately turn off the heat and take the pan off the burner. Continue stirring to cool the mixture slightly, then stir in the salt.

Transfer the chutney to the bowl and let it cool completely. It is ready to eat immediately. Store in an airtight container at room temperature. This chutney will keep nearly indefinitely, but its flavors will be at their best for 1 month.

# SOUTHEAST ASIA

WHEN AND HOW TO SERVE SOUTHEAST ASIAN PICKLES
BASICS OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN PICKLES

## VIETNAM

DAIKON AND CARROT PICKLE (DO CHUA)
PICKLED BEAN SPROUTS (DUA GIA)
FERMENTED “COCK SAUCE” (AND BONUS VINEGAR HOT SAUCE)

## THAILAND

PICKLED CHILES WITH LIME
CUCUMBER AND SHALLOT PICKLE
SWEET PICKLED GARLIC (KRATIEM DONG)
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BANANA KETCHUP
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JICAMA WITH FISH PASTE AND LEMON

## INDONESIA

HOT PICKLED PINEAPPLE AND PEANUTS
JAVANESE CARROT AND CUCUMBER PICKLE (ACAR TIMUN)
SPICED COCONUT TAMARIND CHUTNEY
INDONESIAN VEGETABLE PICKLE (ACAR KUNING)

## MALAYSIA

MALAYSIAN PICKLED VEGETABLES (PENANG ACAR)

I HAVE LONG LOVED SOUTHEAST ASIAN PICKLES. When I was in Thailand, I took cooking classes where I learned not only how to toast the spices for a proper red curry paste, but also how to quickly concoct a little sweet and tangy cucumber and shallot pickle to go with it. And when I was traveling through Ubud in Indonesia, dousing my mie goreng with the local sambal, which was so delicious, I smuggled a half dozen bottles home in my suitcase.

In time, as my interest in pickles grew—and I got tired of the same old flavors of vinegar and standard pickling spice—I turned to Southeast Asian flavors—the savory, the sweet, the heat, and the tang—which were invigorating, unusual yet familiar, and otherworldly delicious.

The countries I've included here are Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia—brilliant pickling nations all. Don't get me wrong: I loved the food in Laos, but other than a remarkable buffalo skin–studded chile paste, no other Lao condiment made an impression on me. And although they may not be represented here, rest assured I have no beef with Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Myanmar, or Singapore (though in truth Singaporean pickles are quite similar to Malaysian).

But there is still a plethora of pickles to choose from! You, my brine-chugging friend, will not starve. Chances are very slim that you've ever crafted—or perhaps even tasted—a proper acar kuning, a yellow-spice-paste-laden, crisp Indonesian pickle that's tangy and sweet with just the right amount of heat. You will find that here, along with several easy-to-make Thai- and Vietnamese-style pickles that come together in minutes, keep in your fridge for months, and are the perfect foil for you and the contents of your wok or grill. One thing I promise is that you will not be bored with these pickles; each of the fifteen is a cure for the common kosher dill.

Some of the ingredients from this region—candlenuts and shrimp paste for example—aren't readily available in most Asian markets or online. And bird's eye peppers, those tiny-but-deadly atomic chiles most commonly used in this cuisine, aren't widely available enough for me to call for in a cookbook, so I've substituted the more common jalapeños and red Fresnos. Also, canning doesn't really come into play for these pickles; they are typically made in small batches and left on the countertop (though I recommend using the refrigerator for safer, longer storage).

## WHEN AND HOW TO SERVE SOUTHEAST ASIAN PICKLES

In the spicy, rich cuisines that are endemic to Southeast Asia, bright, acidic, fruity pickles are often a palate pivot to stimulate the appetite. Pickles are a staple at mealtime, and they're necessary components of many classic dishes: that awakening hit of acid that contrasts with oily wok-tossed nasi goreng or deep-fried lumpia; that bit of crunch and lightness that refreshes the mouth in the wake of coconut-laden curries and satay sauce. Vietnamese bahn mi would not be the same without those crisp shreds of vinegared carrot and daikon playing against the fatty pork, pâté, and mayonnaise. In the Philippines, atchara is not just an accompaniment, but a complete vegetable dish eaten alongside grilled meats or burgers. In Thailand, pickled chiles are on the table for each diner to customize her meal as her own, just as in Malaysia, where some version of Penang acar is in every street food vendor's stall. Just try and eat Vietnamese food without chile sauce. You will feel sad and empty inside.

## BASICS OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN PICKLES

Southeast Asia is a geographically large region comprised of several countries and numerous cultures and cuisines. But there are some elements that, while they may not apply to every cuisine, are more or less endemic in the region.

- **NUTS AND SEEDS.** Candlenuts, peanuts, and sesame seeds are common pantry items in the sauces and curries of Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia (and also somewhat in China). They also add a richness to the pickle jar and, at times, a distinctive crunch. Westerners don't often think of oily nuts and vinegary brine paired, but the combination is very pleasant, the two elements balancing one another out; think of a well-blended vinaigrette. In the recipes that follow, note that macadamias are a suitable substitute for candlenuts, which are hard to find on this side of the Pacific.

- **CITRUS.** Lime juice, lime zest, lime leaves, and of course the super-citrusy notes of lemongrass: not only do these ingredients give pickle flavors a boost, but like vinegar, acidic citrus also helps preserve the food. More often than not, Southeast Asian pickles balance out these tart notes with a bit of sugar and the heat of a chile pepper or two (or three).

- **STRONG FISHY FLAVOR.** While Korea's pickles sport a fair measure of fish sauce, seafood, and dried fish, Southeast Asia doubles down on fishiness, using extra-pungent fermented fish paste or shrimp paste as backbone flavoring agents (see "Anchovy Paste", for a substitution). That said, this kiss of fish is not unpleasant in the least. Like garum, the Romans' prized fermented fish–based flavoring sauce, fermented and salted fish ingredients make any dish, pickles included, more savory and well-rounded, without being overtly fishy. I double dog dare you to omit the smidge of anchovy that adds depth to your favorite Italian pasta dish. Same idea.

- **SPICE PASTE BRINE.** Many Thai and Vietnamese pickles revolve around an easy-peasy brine of white vinegar, water, shallots, sugar, and salt. But Indonesian, Singaporean, and Malaysian pickle brines share a characteristic of crafting a proper curry: they begin with a blended spice paste, which is sometimes fried it in a bit of oil to coax out its toasty flavors before it's mixed with vinegar. Typical spice paste ingredients include shallots, garlic, and chile, and sometimes ginger, fresh turmeric, nuts, shrimp paste, lemongrass, tamarind, or citrus. Some combinations can easily be ground with salt in a bowl or with a mortar and pestle; others come together far more easily a food processor.

- **JULIENNE-CUT VEGETABLES.** I'm going to chalk this up to colonization by the French, but the toothsome texture of many Southeast Asian pickles requires that the vegetables be julienned. I know this presents a lot of knifework on your part, so be sure to start with a very sharp blade. Make life easier with a mandoline if you have one, but more often than not, you shouldn't use a food processor; it will mostly just turn your vegetables into mush.

VIETNAM

# DAIKON AND CARROT PICKLE

## (DO CHUA)

You've got a French roll, pâté, roast pork, mayo, sliced chiles, and a fistful of cilantro. What's missing? The light, crisp julienned carrot and daikon pickle that is essential to the banh mi Vietnamese sandwich experience. Get your knife and get to work! The results will be worth it. (You can julienne the vegetables with a mandoline, but I don't recommend the food processor, as the texture often gets too soft and mushy.) Oh, and should you wish to elevate that sandwich from "Royale" to "Royale with Cheese," as they would say in *Pulp Fiction*, you will also want to make a batch of Pickled Bean Sprouts (opposite).

• TIME: ABOUT 1½ HOURS • MAKES ABOUT 2½ CUPS •

12 ounces daikon radish, peeled

8 ounces carrots, peeled

1 teaspoon kosher salt

½ cup distilled white vinegar

¾ cup water

3 tablespoons sugar

Chop the daikon and carrots into 1½- to 2-inch-long matchsticks. Toss them with the salt in a medium bowl and let them sit for 30 minutes, stirring once

halfway through.

Drain the vegetables and pack them into a 20-ounce (or larger) jar. In a measuring cup with a spout, combine the vinegar, water, and sugar and stir to dissolve the sugar, then pour the brine over the vegetables, pressing down on the vegetables as needed to submerge them.

This pickle can be eaten in an hour, but it's even better if you let it sit, refrigerated, until the next day. It will keep for at least a month in the refrigerator. Note that its aroma will get quite strong, but that its flavor and texture will hold beautifully.

# PICKLED BEAN SPROUTS

## (DUA GIA)

Pickled mung bean sprouts are heartier than their watery nature would suggest, and they are fast and versatile. Not only will they make your Vietnamese sandwiches sing (along with Daikon and Carrot Pickle (opposite), but these fresh, plump, white sprouts add a clean, airy crunch to fish tacos, salads, and more. This is also a great pickle for garnishing a Chinese-style stir-fry—a generous sprinkling atop fish or tofu mixed with vegetables, garlic, ginger, and soy sauce adds a crisp vinegary tang.

• TIME: ABOUT 30 MINUTES • MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS •

1 pound mung bean sprouts

5 green onions, tough tops removed and white and pale green parts sliced into thin rounds

1 teaspoon kosher salt

3 tablespoons sugar

5 tablespoons unseasoned rice vinegar

Wash the sprouts and drain them well. Put the sprouts and green onions in a large bowl. In a separate small bowl or cup, combine the salt, sugar, and vinegar and stir to dissolve the salt and sugar, then pour over the sprouts and onions.

Let the pickle sit for about 10 minutes, and it's ready to eat, though it will be even better the next day. Refrigerate and enjoy this pickle for up to 3 weeks.

# FERMENTED “COCK SAUCE”

## (AND BONUS VINEGAR HOT SAUCE)

This recipe makes two finished condiments: a spoonable hot, chunky garlic sauce, and a thin vinegary hot sauce (think Tabasco). What I wanted to make here is a homemade version of Huy Fong chile garlic sauce (the famous one with the rooster on the label), which is made in the United States by a Vietnamese man. In our house, this frequently used condiment is known lovingly as cock sauce. I’ve made plenty of delicious hot sauce over the years, but nothing has ever tasted like cock sauce and I now I know why: the secret is in the fermentation. Please see the note on working with hot peppers (see headnote in the recipe for Chile Sauce)—it can save you some tears. The cock sauce is excellent for cooking or as a table condiment; the vinegar hot sauce is great poured over everything from beans and rice to eggs, and it makes a great addition to a dipping sauce for spring rolls or dumplings.

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• TIME: 2 TO 4 DAYS • MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS COCK SAUCE AND 1 CUP VINEGAR HOT SAUCE •

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2 pounds Fresno chiles

9 cloves garlic

1 teaspoon fine sea salt

6 tablespoons distilled white vinegar

2 teaspoons kosher salt

Wash the chiles and chop off their stems. If you’d like your sauce less hot, remove the seeds and membranes and discard. Working in two batches, blend

the peppers, garlic, and sea salt in a food processor until very liquid, about 2 minutes. The mixture should have the consistency of a smoothie and appear a bit foamy on top.

Scrape the sauce into a very clean 1-quart (or larger) glass jar; you want to be able to see through it, and you don't want plastic, as it will retain the strong odors. Cover the top of the jar loosely with a small square of clean cloth or a piece of paper towel, and secure it in place with a rubber band. You want the sauce to breathe, but also want to keep out insects and debris.

Move the jar to a cool spot away from direct sunlight. Depending on the ambient temperature, the mixture will ferment in 2 to 4 days (fermentation usually happens faster when it's warm). Liquid will separate to the bottom, and the thicker sauce will rise to the top. When the thick part of the sauce has become riddled with bubbles, you know your sauce has fermented. Smell and taste the sauce to see if it has fermented enough for your liking. If it has, proceed to the next step; if not, you can leave it to continue to ferment for another week or so. Keep checking the top for any signs of mold; if it grows, remove the mold and discard it, and proceed with the next step.

Pour the fermented sauce through a fine-mesh sieve set over a saucepan. You now have two ways to set your mouth aflame: the raw, chunky garlic sauce left in the sieve (which is ready to eat), and the pourable table sauce that has drained through it. Put the chunky sauce in a bowl and, to each sauce, add 3 tablespoons of the vinegar and 1 teaspoon of the kosher salt; stir to combine.

The chunky garlic sauce may be used immediately; kept bottled in a glass container in the refrigerator, it will retain its heat for at least 3 months.

Boil the thin sauce for 1 minute, then leave it to cool to room temperature before transferring it to a glass jar or pouring bottle with a tight lid. It will keep indefinitely in the refrigerator.

*Pickled Chiles with Lime*

THAILAND

# PICKLED CHILES WITH LIME

On every table in every Thai restaurant in Thailand and beyond, pickled chiles called *prik dong nam som* sit waiting for you in a tiny jar with a tiny spoon. No pad see ew or pad thai should ever have to go without it, as it brings not only some midlevel heat to a dish, but also a delightful pungency from the vinegar. The chiles are meant to be spooned into your dish with their brine; I love this because it means that nothing ever goes to waste. I gussied up the classic formula just a little here, adding a bit of red onion (which turns a pretty purple in the jar) and some lime zest for zing. In addition to using with stir-fried noodles, try this over omelets or curries, or spooned into noodle soups.

• TIME: 1 DAY • MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS •

3 (2-inch) pieces lime zest

½ cup diced red onion

8 ounces jalapeño or Fresno chiles, or some of each, stemmed and sliced into thin rounds

1 teaspoon kosher salt

2 tablespoons sugar

About 6 tablespoons distilled white vinegar

About 6 tablespoons cool water

Place the zest and onion in a 1-pint jar, then pack in the sliced chiles. Sprinkle the salt and sugar on top, then pour over just enough of the vinegar to reach halfway up the jar. Top the jar off with the water.

Cover tightly and shake the jar to dissolve the salt and sugar. Let it rest on the countertop for 24 hours before eating, then store in the refrigerator. It will keep for at least a month.

# CUCUMBER AND SHALLOT PICKLE

Crisp, clean, and refreshing, this will instantly brighten your spicy coconut milk curry or add a bit of crunch to your ham or pork loin sandwich. Make it, and you'll find it gets gobbled at breakneck speed—this is a picnic pickle with kid appeal: pure, bright crunch with no strong chile flavors. And furthermore, it's easy to make, so it's one that will become a regular player in your refrigerator. Just one note on kaffir lime leaves: they add a very distinctive flavor here but can be tough to find (see the Glossary for some hints). The pickle's still delicious without them, but do use them if you can.

• TIME: 2 HOURS • MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS •

1 cup water

1 cup distilled white vinegar

4 whole kaffir lime leaves, fresh or dried

3 thin slices peeled fresh ginger

¼ cup sugar

2 teaspoons kosher salt

1 pound Kirby or other small pickling cucumbers

2 ounces shallots

In a medium saucepan, combine the water, vinegar, lime leaves, ginger, sugar, and salt. Cover tightly, bring the brine to a boil, and then lower the heat and simmer, still covered, so steam doesn't escape, for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, wash the cucumbers, trim and discard their ends, and slice into thin rounds; transfer them to a medium bowl. Peel the shallots and slice them thinly as well. Add them to the bowl with the cucumbers, toss to combine, and then pack the vegetables snugly into a 1-quart jar.

Hold a fine-mesh sieve over the mouth of the jar and carefully pour the hot brine through it and over the vegetables. Discard the solids. Cover the jar and let it sit on the countertop for at least 2 hours and up to 24. Your pickle is now ready to eat. It will keep for at least 3 weeks in the refrigerator.

## SCRUBBING OR TRIMMING CUCUMBERS FOR PICKLING

Have you ever made a cucumber pickle that has quickly gone to mush in the jar? That's because the rooting hormone at the stem end of cukes has an evil quality: it softens vegetables in a matter of days. Yuck! To avoid this unfortunate side effect, cucumbers must either be vigorously scrubbed and rinsed at the tips with a hearty green kitchen scrubber, or simply lop off the ends and discard. Voila! No more soft cucumber pickles—ever!

# SWEET PICKLED GARLIC

## (KRATIEM DONG)

Every year there's a garlic festival in Gilroy, California, that features garlic ice cream, garlic peanut butter cups, and of course a contest for a crowned and lovely Garlic Queen. Garlic isn't something that we often think of in a sweet context, but this sweet pickle is more than welcome sliced into curries, minced into omelets, or dropped into soups, and it's an essential ingredient for the popular fried noodle appetizer mee krob. And because it's so easy to put together and it won't take up much space in your fridge as it cures, it's a good one to make now and happily discover later.

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• TIME: ABOUT 8 WEEKS • MAKES ABOUT ½ CUP CLOVES •

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1 head of garlic (about 6 ounces)

⅔ cup sugar

2 teaspoons kosher salt

⅓ cup water

⅓ cup distilled white vinegar

Peel the garlic, keeping each clove intact (for a tip on peeling garlic quickly and easily, see this sidebar). Collect them in a 12-ounce (or larger) jar.

In a small saucepan over medium heat, combine the sugar, salt, water, and vinegar and cook, stirring frequently, until the sugar fully dissolves, about 3 minutes. Pour the brine over the garlic, cap it tightly, and let it sit at room temperature for 24 hours. Move the garlic to the refrigerator and let it sit for

8 weeks. As it cures, the garlic will mellow and take on a sweet and salty flavor. The garlic will keep for at least 6 months.

# THAI PICKLED CABBAGE

Cabbage in some kind of preserved state is enjoyed nearly universally. While Thailand does not have its own signature cabbage pickle, the vegetable is magnificent with the flavors we have come to associate with Thai cuisine: lime juice, fish sauce, garlic, ginger, and chile. While this recipe may not be traditional, all of its components are. We often rely on vinegar for pickle brines, but this recipe relies on citrus juice—another great way to preserve and flavor vegetables. This is one that I return to again and again. Not only can it fill in for coleslaw at a picnic, it's outstanding tossed into noodles or served on top of stir-fried or grilled pork or fish.

• TIME: 1 DAY • MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS •

1½ pounds napa cabbage

2 tablespoons kosher salt

½ cup lime juice

3 tablespoons fish sauce

1 tablespoon sugar

1 clove garlic, finely minced or put through a press

1 (⅔-inch) piece peeled fresh ginger, finely minced

1 small jalapeño chile

Discard the tough outer leaves of the cabbage and quarter the cabbage lengthwise. Chop the cabbage into 1-inch pieces and place in a large colander. Sprinkle the salt onto the cabbage and combine thoroughly with

your hands; let it sit in the sink for 20 minutes. Stir it once halfway through the time; you'll notice that the cabbage has started to wilt and get wet.

Combine the lime juice, fish sauce, sugar, garlic, and ginger in a large bowl. Stem the jalapeño, slice it into very thin rounds, and add it to the bowl.

Rinse the cabbage with cool water to rid it of some of the salt. Squeeze it very firmly and repeatedly to expel as much moisture as you can, then let it drain well; if it is too wet, it will dilute your pickle.

Add the drained cabbage to the brine and toss to combine. This pickle can be eaten straight away, but it is much better the next day. Unused portions can be refrigerated for at least 3 weeks.

PHILIPPINES

# BANANA KETCHUP

This omnipresent condiment, dyed bright red, chock-full of high-fructose corn syrup, chemicals, and stabilizers, and sold under the Jufran and UFC labels (among others), sits in every Filipino pantry and is a serious dunking sauce for potatoes, eggs, burgers, hot dogs, spaghetti, and more. It has become a culinary symbol of national pride akin to ube ice cream and lumpia, but it is even more delicious when made at home (though yours will be beige instead of bright red). Made of bananas preserved with vinegar and spices, this sauce does have a similar flavor profile to tomato ketchup; in fact, it was developed to replace ketchup during a World War II tomato shortage.

• TIME: ABOUT 1 HOUR • MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS •

4 medium-size ripe bananas

3 tablespoons vegetable oil

¾ cup water

¼ cup distilled white vinegar

1 teaspoon black peppercorns

5 cardamom pods, cracked

5 cloves

2 bay leaves

1 star anise

8 ounces yellow onion, chopped

3 cloves garlic, sliced

1½ teaspoons kosher salt

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar

Preheat the oven to 425°F and line a small baking sheet with parchment paper.

Peel the bananas and cut them in half crosswise. Place them on the lined baking sheet and drizzle them with 1 tablespoon of the oil. Roll the bananas around in the oil to coat and then roast them for 30 minutes, until brown.

In a small saucepan, combine the water, white vinegar, peppercorns, cardamom, cloves, bay leaves, and star anise. Cover and bring to a boil, then lower the heat to maintain a very low simmer. Keeping the pan covered, let it just simmer, without steam escaping, for 20 to 25 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a medium skillet set over medium-high heat, sauté the onion and garlic with the remaining 2 tablespoons of oil and the salt, stirring occasionally, for 20 minutes, until the onion turns dark brown around the edges. In the last minute of cooking, add the cinnamon and stir to combine.

In a food processor, combine the roasted bananas and sautéed onion and garlic and process until smooth. Strain the solids from the simmered vinegar and spice brine and discard them, then stream the brine into the food processor with the machine running. Add the apple cider vinegar and blend until completely smooth.

The ketchup is ready to eat right away, but it will keep, refrigerated, in a jar or airtight container for at least 3 weeks.

*Atchara*

# ATCHARA

Also called atsara, this is the quintessential pickle of the Philippines—and for very good reason. It's a delicious mouth-happening of sweet, sour, and hot, with a slaw-like consistency and a very firm and crisp texture. Some recipes feature pineapple instead of raisins; you can also omit the onions or otherwise tailor the contents to your liking. Every family has its own "correct" recipe; this one is simply a good place to start. Eat it with any grilled or fried food, on top of rice, or in a chicken, fish, or pork sandwich. Serve it in condiment-sized quantities during a meal, or as a full-fledged side dish—the recipe yields plenty.

• TIME: 5 HOURS TO 1 DAY • MAKES ABOUT 10 CUPS •

2½ pounds green papaya

3 tablespoons kosher salt

3 ounces carrots, peeled

8 ounces red bell pepper

2 large jalapeño chiles

6 ounces red onion

1 (¾-inch) piece peeled fresh ginger

4 cloves garlic

⅓ cup raisins

2 cups distilled white vinegar

1½ cups water

½ cup sugar

Peel and seed the papaya, then shred it coarsely using either a food processor or a mandoline. Overachievers may wish to finely julienne by hand, but it's not necessary for this preparation. In a colander set over the sink, toss the papaya with the salt and let it sit for 40 minutes, stirring once halfway through.

While the papaya is resting, julienne the carrots and bell pepper and transfer them to a very large bowl. Stem the jalapeños, slice them into very thin rounds, and add them to the bowl. Peel the onion, cut it into quarters, then slice it very thinly and add it to the bowl as well. Mince the ginger and garlic and set aside separately.

When the papaya has finished resting, squeeze it very, very firmly, one handful at a time, until it rains out its moisture. Squeeze it until liquid is no longer exuded; you want it to be very dry and clumping. Add the squeezed papaya to the bowl with the other vegetables and toss with your hands until thoroughly combined.

In a medium saucepan, combine the ginger and garlic with the raisins, vinegar, water, and sugar. Cook over high heat, uncovered, and stir to dissolve the sugar. Let the mixture boil for 1 minute before taking it off the heat. Immediately pour it over the papaya mixture, pressing down on the vegetables if necessary to submerge them in the brine. Also, make sure to push the raisins down into the vegetables rather than letting them sit on top. Don't worry if there doesn't appear to be enough brine; the vegetables will yield more as they sit.

Cover the bowl loosely with plastic wrap and let the pickle sit at room temperature for at least 4 hours and up to 24. Your pickle is now ready to eat, but it will be much better after sitting for a day. Pack it into a 2-quart jar (or two 1-quart jars, or any number of containers with tight lids) and refrigerate. This pickle will keep for at least 1 month.

# JICAMA WITH FISH PASTE AND LEMON

I'm not going to lie to you: this is one ugly pickle. But if you can get past its murky appearance, you will be rewarded with a firm, crisp pickle that can hold its own next to anything fried. Jicama is often paired with bagoong, Filipino fish paste; here I'm substituting the more widely available anchovy paste. Expect each bite to be bright, savory, and unexpected.

• TIME: ABOUT 1½ HOURS • MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS •

1 clove garlic

3 thin slices peeled fresh ginger

2 teaspoons kosher salt

2 tablespoons anchovy paste

¾ cup fresh lemon juice

1½ pounds jicama, peeled and chopped into ¾-inch cubes

½ cup minced red onion

½ cup cilantro leaves

Finely mince the garlic and ginger or pass them through a press, then transfer it to a very large wood, ceramic, or glass bowl (plastic will get scratched). Add the salt and, using the back of a sturdy soup spoon, mash the salt into the garlic and ginger to make a paste; the salt should be fully incorporated. (Feel free to use a mortar and pestle for this task if you have one.)

Stir in the anchovy paste, then the lemon juice to make a brine. Add the jicama, onion, and cilantro and toss to coat in the brine completely.

Let sit at room temperature for 1 hour before eating; however, this pickle will be even better the next day. Refrigerate and enjoy this pickle for at least 2 weeks.

*Hot Pickled Pineapple and Peanuts*

INDONESIA

# HOT PICKLED PINEAPPLE AND PEANUTS

Pickling fruit is a frontier in a world of vegetable dominance, but pineapple is one of the best of the sweet fruits for the job: it's firm, naturally acidic, and sweet. And peanuts (or any kind of nut, really) also play nicely in the pickle bath, lending a bit of heft and chew, and plumping up all pretty-like in the jar. The chile just brings it all together, and its red flecks pop against the yellow fruit. Serve this as an appetizer or a side dish, and keep this recipe in mind when you can't eat a whole pineapple straight away. Note that if you must, you can substitute drained canned pineapple chunks, but fresh is really much better.

• TIME: ABOUT 1½ HOURS • MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS •

½ cup raw peanuts

1 clove garlic

1½ teaspoons kosher salt

2 tablespoons chile sauce, such as Fermented "Cock Sauce"

2 teaspoons anchovy paste

2 tablespoons fish sauce

½ cup distilled white vinegar

1½ cups chopped fresh pineapple, in 1-inch cubes

Place the peanuts in a small skillet over medium heat. Scorch them, shaking the pan, for about 5 minutes, until blackened in spots. Set aside to cool.

Finely mince the garlic or put it through a press. In a large wood, glass, or ceramic bowl (plastic will scratch and retain odors), combine the garlic with the salt. Use the back of a sturdy spoon to mash the garlic and salt together into a paste. It will take a couple of minutes to get it smooth. (Of course, if you have a mortar and pestle, you can use that instead.) Stir in the chile sauce, anchovy paste, and fish sauce until well combined. Stream in the vinegar and mix well.

Add the peanuts and pineapple and mix to coat completely, then spoon everything into a 1-pint jar. Don’t worry if there isn’t enough brine to cover; the fruit will yield more of its juice as it sits. Cover tightly and let it sit for at least 1 hour before eating. This pickle, stored in the refrigerator, will continue to be delicious for 2 weeks.

# JAVANESE CARROT AND CUCUMBER PICKLE

## (ACAR TIMUN)

This pickle is also eaten in Malaysia and Singapore, and its wide appeal is easy to understand. It is pretty to look at, and it has a nice bite from shallots, a sweet edge, a light touch of vinegar, and a mild jab of chile. It's a simple pickle that's a must-eat with shrimp crackers or fried fritters of any kind, and it's the quintessential pickle of national dishes nasi goreng and mie goreng. Feel free to eat this as is or to top with a sprinkling of ground macadamia nuts before serving.

• TIME: 1 DAY • MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS •

7 ounces carrots

9 ounces Persian cucumbers

1½ teaspoons kosher salt

¾ cup distilled white vinegar

1½ cups water

¼ cup sugar

2 large shallots, thinly sliced into rings

1 large jalapeño chile, stemmed and thinly sliced into rings

Trim and discard the ends from the carrots and cucumbers, julienne them, and put them in a bowl. Sprinkle with the salt and toss to evenly distribute the

salt. Let them sit for 10 minutes, stirring once halfway through, until they have sweated out some of their liquid.

Thinly slice the shallots and jalapeño into rings and set aside.

Drain the carrots and cucumbers and, grabbing a small handful at a time, squeeze them very, very firmly until no more liquid comes out of them. Transfer to a medium bowl.

In a small saucepan, combine the vinegar, water, and sugar and bring to a boil, stirring to help dissolve the sugar.

Add the shallots and jalapeño to the carrots and cucumbers, pour in the boiling brine, and let sit on the countertop to cool completely, about 2 hours. Transfer to a glass or ceramic container (plastic will retain its aroma) and refrigerate. The pickle is ready to eat the next day, and it will keep for at least 2 weeks in the refrigerator.

# SPICED COCONUT TAMARIND CHUTNEY

I love coconut in all forms, particularly savory, and if you share my affinity, this lightening-fast chutney will not disappoint. (And it's even better if you start from whole coconuts.) This whips up quickly and leaves a trail of flavor in its wake. Part of me wants to just sit back and enjoy this with my skewers of satay. But another large part of me wants to add egg white and sugar and whip up the most insane macaroons on the planet. A little nutmeg and clove can go a long way; be sure not to go overboard with their application.

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• TIME: ABOUT 10 MINUTES • MAKES ABOUT ⅔ CUP •

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½ cup tamarind concentrate, or ¼ cup tamarind paste soaked in ½ cup boiling water

½ cup unsweetened flaked coconut, store-bought or homemade

1 thin slice peeled fresh ginger, very finely minced or put through a press

¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

⅛ teaspoon ground cloves

½ teaspoon kosher salt

If soaking tamarind paste, use your fingers to mash it into a slurry, then strain it to remove all the seeds and pods, pressing firmly on the solids to extract as much of the liquid as possible.

Combine the tamarind with the coconut, ginger, nutmeg, cloves, and salt in a small bowl and mix well. Serve immediately. Unused portions may be refrigerated in an airtight container for up to a week.

# INDONESIAN VEGETABLE PICKLE

## (ACAR KUNING)

This bright yellow pickle takes on its lovely hue from fresh turmeric. In addition to being beautiful to look at, its flavor is potent and divine. Acar kuning also takes on a bit of richness from the macadamia nuts and added oil, making it capable of standing on its own as a snack or a side dish as well. This is one of the great pickles of its native country, and its flavors are both familiar and exotic. Note that a food processor is going to make life much easier for this recipe, and handle the turmeric with care—it stains.

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• TIME: 1 DAY • MAKES ABOUT 6 CUPS •

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3 ounces carrots, peeled

10 ounces Kirby or other small pickling cucumbers

3 ounces green beans

6 ounces green cabbage

1½ ounces fresh turmeric, peeled

1½ ounces fresh ginger, peeled

5 cloves garlic, peeled

¼ cup macadamia nuts

2 teaspoons anchovy paste

4 stalks lemongrass (tender inside heart only)

6 shallots, peeled

5 small dried red chile peppers

1 tablespoon sugar

2 Fresno chiles, stemmed

¼ cup peanut oil

1 cup unseasoned rice vinegar

2 teaspoons fine sea salt

First, prepare the vegetables. Trim the carrots, cucumbers, and beans and discard the ends. Julienne the carrots and cucumbers and chop the beans and cabbage into 1-inch pieces. Combine them all in a bowl and set aside.

In a food processor, whirl the turmeric, ginger, and garlic until they're as minced as possible. Add the nuts, anchovy paste, lemongrass, shallots, dried chiles, sugar, and fresh chiles and process until finely minced. Scrape down the sides, turn the machine back on, and stream in the oil. Scraping down the sides as necessary, let the machine whirl for 1 to 2 minutes, until you have a paste.

Scrape the paste into a medium Dutch oven set over medium heat. Cook for about 10 minutes, scraping the bottom of the pot often. The paste will dry somewhat, darken a shade, and become aromatic.

Turn off the heat, then carefully pour in the vinegar—it will splatter a bit—and stir to combine, then stir in the salt. While the brine is still warm, add the vegetables and stir to coat completely. Place the lid on and let the pickle sit at room temperature for 24 hours; stir it occasionally. Your pickle will accumulate more liquid as the water in the vegetables is pulled out. After 1 day it is ready to eat. Or you can transfer to jars or containers with tight lids and refrigerate for at least 3 weeks.

# A BETTER WAY TO PEEL GINGER AND TURMERIC

Send your carrot-and-potato peeler packing for this job. When it comes to skinning a rhizome, a simple teaspoon is far more effective at scraping away the thin skin while preserving the tender flesh beneath. It’s also better equipped to handle the knobby nooks of a rhizome’s odd shape. Try it! (You’re welcome.)

*Malaysian Pickled Vegetables*

MALAYSIA

# MALAYSIAN PICKLED VEGETABLES

## (PENANG ACAR)

Penang acar (or peranakan acar, or nyonya acar, depending on where it's made) is the Mount Everest of pickling ("Why do we pickle it? Because *it's there*!"). I promise that your Herculean efforts (blanching the vegetables, drying the vegetables, blending the spice paste, making the brine) will result in a pickle that is the pride of your home pickling career. In Malaysia, this is the ultimate comfort pickle—the one that everybody's mother makes better than anyone else's. Some insist on cauliflower and pineapple or raisins; others deem them inauthentic. Most recipes use both peanuts and sesame seeds, but a few swear by peanut butter instead. One thing is certain: it's an addictive pickle that eats like a meal, and it will bring a mountain of pleasure to both eye and palate.

• TIME: ABOUT 3 HOURS • MAKES ABOUT 8 CUPS •

6 cups water

1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon kosher salt

1 tablespoon sugar

1¾ cups distilled white vinegar

8 ounces Persian cucumbers, ends trimmed or scrubbed (see this sidebar) and julienned

1½ cups chopped pineapple, in 1-inch cubes

¾ cup cut green beans, trimmed and chopped into 1-inch pieces

3 cups chopped cauliflower, in ½-inch cubes

5 ounces carrots, peeled and julienned

1½ pounds green cabbage, quartered, cored, and cut into 1-inch strips

5 cloves garlic, peeled

1 (3-inch) piece peeled fresh turmeric

1 (2-inch) piece peeled fresh ginger, coarsely chopped

2 large jalapeño chiles, stemmed

7 small dried red chile peppers

⅔ cup raw peanuts

3 ounces shallots

1 tablespoon anchovy paste

2 tablespoons peanut or vegetable oil

½ cup packed brown sugar

½ cup toasted white sesame seeds

In a medium Dutch oven or other heavy-bottomed pot, combine the water with the 1 tablespoon of salt, the sugar, and 1 cup of the vinegar and bring to a boil over high heat.

Combine the cucumbers with the remaining 1 teaspoon of salt in a small mixing bowl. Toss with your hands to distribute the salt and set aside for 15 minutes, tossing once halfway through. After they've started to sweat their liquid, drain them well and pour them into the center of a clean kitchen towel. Bring the four corners of the towel together and, over the sink, twist it to squeeze the cucumbers and rain out as much moisture as possible. Set the cucumbers aside.

When the seasoned water comes to a boil, you're going to lightly boil the vegetables and fruit one at a time, so as not to crowd the pot. First add the pineapple to the pot, cover, and boil for 2 minutes; remove with a slotted spoon and transfer to a large colander in the sink. Run cold water over it to stop the cooking. Next boil the beans in the same way for 2 minutes before adding them to the pineapple and rinsing to cool; then cook the cauliflower for 2 minutes, and then the carrots for 1 minute, adding each to the colander and rinsing to stop the cooking. Then cook the cabbage for 2 minutes, uncovered this time; stir it continuously, as there will be a lot to fit into the pot. Transfer the cabbage to the colander with a slotted spoon and rinse it, along with all of the other vegetables, under cold running water to stop the cooking. Pour about 1 cup of the hot liquid into another vessel and discard the rest or save it for soup stock. Set the pot aside; you're going to use it again.

Drain the vegetables in the colander very well, stirring them with your hands to combine and to coax out as much water as you can. Combine the squeezed cucumbers with the vegetables, then divide the vegetables between two large kitchen towels; roll up the towels and squeeze gently to help dry the vegetables off.

Preheat the oven to 200°F with the racks in the middle. Divide the vegetables between 2 large rimmed baking sheets and transfer them into the oven to dry. Keep the oven door a little ajar, wedging it open with the handle of a wooden spoon if necessary, to allow moisture to escape. Dry the vegetables for about 1½ hours, stirring them once halfway through, until they are dry to the touch. Note that if you have access to hot, direct sunlight, you can dry the vegetables in the sun instead.

While the vegetables dry, make the spice paste. In a food processor, combine the garlic, turmeric, ginger, jalapeños, dried chiles, peanuts, shallots, and anchovy paste and process into a paste, scraping down the sides as necessary. When the paste is smooth, stream in the oil with the machine running and process until fully incorporated.

Scrape the spice paste into the dry Dutch oven and set it over medium heat. Cook the paste for about 10 minutes, scraping the bottom of the pot with a heavy wooden spoon, until it dries, becomes fragrant, and darkens somewhat. Add the brown sugar, the remaining ¾ cup of vinegar, and the 1 cup of reserved boiling liquid from the vegetables. Stir to combine, cover, remove from the heat, and set this brine aside until the vegetables are dried. Add all of the vegetables to the brine (it should still be warm) and stir well to combine, then stir in the sesame seeds.

The achar is ready to eat, but it will taste even better the next day. Let it sit at room temperature for about 4 hours, then pack into covered glass or ceramic containers (plastic may retain its odors) and refrigerate. This pickle will keep for at least 3 weeks.

# GLOSSARY

**ACAR** Variously known as achar, achara, atsara, or atchara depending on where it's from (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines; though the word has also been used for pickles from India and the Middle East), acar is simply another word for humble pickled vegetables. A Southeast Asian acar at its simplest is redolent of garlic or shallot, chiles, sugar, and vinegar; the vegetables can also sometimes be blanched and dried. Or, an acar can begin with a more complex blended spice paste that is toasted before being diluted with vinegar, which clings to the vegetables rather than being left behind in the jar. Acar is not usually canned for shelf storage. However, when refrigerated, it will usually last at least three weeks.

**AJWAIN** The small, flat seeds of ajwain have a delightful flavor—imagine a marriage of thyme, oregano, dill, and cumin. They give an excellent herby backbone to pickles. If you don't have ajwain, use a mix of thyme and cumin seeds instead.

**ANCHOVY PASTE** Ah, the concentrated flavor of fish. For the Western palate, a paste of preserved and salted fish is often a surefire way to wrinkle a nose. But it adds depth, savor, and, well, rightness to many dishes (just ask an Italian), and in the cuisines (and by extension the pickles) of Southeast Asia, preserved fishy flavors permeate. In Indonesia, terasi, dried shrimp paste sold in blocks, is cooked before use, a foil-wrapped hunk being held over a gas flame for about 30 seconds a side. In the Philippines, bagoong can be either fish or shrimp fermented with salt, and in Malaysia, it's belacan, also compressed into an odorous block. Unfortunately, you will probably have difficulty finding these ingredients where you live; nor could I find a satisfactory online resource to direct you to. Thus, whenever a pickle here

needs a hit of preserved fish, I have substituted anchovy paste, which is both widely available and (nearly) pungent enough. Choose one made with anchovies, oil, and salt and nothing more. Should you be fortunate to find the real deal at your local Asian market, do use it (toasting it first in a well-ventilated area if it's terasi or belacan) and swap it out for the anchovies. In a total pinch, good-quality fish sauce can also stand in.

**ARAME** Arame is a kind of kelp or sea vegetable used in Japanese cuisine; it has a mild flavor and an unchallenging texture. It's usually sold dried (it looks like little dark brown bits of dry grass) and is soaked before using to reconstitute it. Hijiki, a similar sea vegetable, can usually be substituted for arame (though its texture is a bit more toothsome).

**ASAFETIDA** You know how a really well-ripened cheese has an odor that, to some, is purely foul? Some foods just have a challenging olfactory aspect, and Indian food tastes like Indian food in large part because of the hard-boiled-egg savoriness of asafetida. This resinous plant gum is very popular in religious sects that don't allow for onions or garlic, as it packs some of their pungency. It used to be that asafetida was only available in dried clumps that had to be pounded or ground before use. Nowadays, it comes in powdered form (usually mixed with rice or wheat flour to keep it from clumping), and this is the sort I used to measure for these recipes.

**ASIAN PEARS** Asian pears (called nashi in Japan) grow throughout Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and China; they usually ripen in the fall and winter. Most often, the skin is tough and needs to be peeled off, but I have eaten varieties grown in California with skin tender enough for eating. This fruit is super juicy, crunchy, and sweet out of hand. It also makes a fine pickle. (Never seen one? It's pictured above.)

**BLACK SESAME OIL** This is the same as toasted sesame oil; it is dark brown in color and is available at Japanese, Chinese, and Korean markets. Light-colored sesame oil is derived from raw seeds, resulting in a very different flavor, so it's no substitute. In this book, black sesame oil is used unheated and in small quantities, its rich, nutty flavor serving to finish a dish. A little goes a long way, and it has an extremely inviting aroma.

**CHILES AND CHILE POWDER** While the tiny and powerful fresh bird's eye chiles are the ones most authentic to Indian cuisine, they can often be difficult to find here in the West. So in this book I chose to use jalapeños, Fresnos, and serranos whenever fresh chiles are needed. When it comes to dried and ground chile powder, we have a couple of options. There's cayenne pepper, sold dried and ground in the spice section and widely available, and this is

considered one of the hotter dried and ground peppers (see note above). But the spice aisle also stocks chile powder, which is a blend of peppers—often cayenne is in the mix—and this combination tends to not be quite as hot. For the recipes in this book, look for a chile powder that contains only chile—this is the sort you'll see at Indian markets. Don't use a Latin American chili powder, as this can also contain cumin, salt, oregano, and/or garlic.

**CILANTRO** See *Coriander*.

**CORIANDER** Coriander is like the Swiss Army knife of culinary plants. The root is used in Thai cuisine to add fresh flavor without the telltale green color. But fresh coriander leaf—known here as cilantro—is the part of the plant we tend to use most, appearing in Indian and many other Asian cuisines, as well as Latin American and Middle Eastern cooking. Its leaves add a mass of big, bright herbaceous flavor when eaten raw or stirred into a soup or curry just before serving. When that green plant goes to seed and dries, it can be used as coriander seed—delicious lemony orbs that burst in your mouth, providing both great flavor and texture for the pickle jar. For the same flavor without the crunch, ground and dried coriander seed is also used in cooking, but I've found that this spice tends to lose its freshness fairly quickly in its powdered form.

**CUMIN** Sold as seeds or ground into a powder, this crowd-pleasing spice (sometimes labeled "jeera" at the Indian grocery) is a frequent high note in curries and a delicious and savory addition to pickles.

**DRIED SHRIMP** Salted dried shrimp come in a variety of sizes. Often served sautéed as part of a side dish or tossed into a stew, they also add a nice briny flavor to pickling seasoning. Dried shrimp come from all over Asia, and I prefer to look for brands whose only ingredients are shrimp and salt. Note that even though they're dried, these are sometimes found in the refrigerated section of Asian markets. If you wish, you can also salt and dry your own in an oven set to the lowest heat or in a food dehydrator.

**FENUGREEK** Fenugreek is another quintessential Indian spice—although it's actually a pulse (a member of the pea family). Its seeds are either toasted and

used whole or ground and sprinkled into food, and it is essential to chutneys and curries. In the Indian grocery, it is sometimes sold as methi.

**FERMENTED BLACK BEANS** Don't look for these black beans in Cuba. Also called salted black beans, these are soybeans that have been heavily salted and fermented with *Aspergillus oryzae* (the mold spore commonly known as koji). Their flavor is really pungent—savory, earthy, salty, and bold—and they are used to season a dish, rather than being served as a dish on their own. Fermented black beans can be flavored with ginger, five-spice, or other flavors, but I much prefer them with salt alone (some cooks rinse the salt from the beans before cooking, but I never do). They are found in Chinese and other Asian groceries.

**FISH SAUCE** Strictly speaking, this popular condiment isn't just "fish" sauce. It can be made from anchovies, shrimp, oysters, fish intestines—the sea's the limit!—salted, pressed, and left to ferment. The liquid that results is fish sauce. (And just for the record, I've made my own, and it's not nearly as nasty smelling as you may think.) Fish sauce adds nice saltiness and savory flavor to pickles and about a zillion other dishes, and plenty of umami flavor. It's like salt in that while you may not necessarily want to taste it in the finished dish, you will indeed notice if it's missing. Fish sauce is ubiquitous in Asian cooking, particularly in Southeast Asian cooking (the brands we find in the West often come from Vietnam and Thailand), and is increasingly available in the Asian food aisle in supermarkets. Look for a brand without chemicals and with a very simple list of ingredients: some kind of seafood, salt, and water.

**FIVE-SPICE POWDER** What are the five spices found in this common Chinese spice blend? Well, it varies. Most common is a combo of anise, cinnamon, fennel, clove, and Sichuan peppercorns, but it's not uncommon to see one or two of those swapped out for ground ginger or nutmeg instead. The flavors of five-spice are warm and wonderful; try it on cooked carrots with butter and lemon. Its flavor is quite potent, so use it sparingly. Five-spice powder can be found with the other jarred spices in the Asian grocery or online.

**FRESNO PEPPERS** Those chile peppers that look like red jalapeños are called Fresnos. They tend to be more expensive than jalapeños, but they have a

more rounded flavor. When you're chopping up just a few peppers to garnish a dish, green and red are fairly interchangeable. However, when making a whole batch of chile sauce (such as the Fermented "Cock Sauce"), go for the red only.

**GOCHUJANG** This spicy fermented paste is traditionally made from barley malt powder, soybean malt, a ton of red chile pepper, garlic, salt, and sugar. It slowly ferments, taking on an earthy flavor after many months, which is balanced by heat and a little sweetness. Think of this as a spicier, sweeter, more garlicky version of Japanese miso. In Korean cooking, it is used as a base for soups and stews, in stir-fries, as a condiment with cooked meat, and, you guessed it, in pickling. If you're buying gochujang, look for refrigerated tubs with quality ingredients—far too many have high-fructose corn syrup and yucky chemicals. Also, find one with a heat ranking that suits you. The hot versions can be very hot indeed.

**JICAMA** The firm, crisp, apple-meets-radish texture and mild sweet flavor of *Pachyrhizus erosus* is found in Southeast Asian and Latin American cuisines alike, but it travels by its Latin American name, jicama. These oversized beige tubers must be peeled deeply to rid them of their brown skin and fibrous outer layer; the inside is creamy white in color and easy to eat. (Pictured here.) Julienne it for salads, serve wide wedges or cubes covered in lemon juice and cayenne pepper, or pickle it (see Jicama with Fish Paste and Lemon).

**KAFFIR LIME LEAF** Kaffir lime leaves have a sweet, vanilla-y, and tangy citrus flavor like no other—on this tree, the leaves actually outshine the fruit. They're an essential ingredient in Thai and Lao food, including one of the pickles included here (Cucumber and Shallot Pickle). I'm fortunate enough to have a pal with a giant, giving tree of kaffir limes and leaves, but the dried leaves can be found in Asian markets and online. Buy them whole, not ground. If you can manage to get ahold of fresh leaves (as pictured above), pack them tightly in plastic wrap and zip-top bags and freeze them; they will last almost indefinitely.

**KALONJI** Also sold as nigella, onion seed, or black cumin (though it's not like cumin at all), these tiny, black seeds are about the size of sesame seeds, but with a more rounded, pyramid shape. They are frequently sprinkled atop naan bread, but their nutty, bitter, peppery flavor tastes great in the pickle world, particularly when toasted. Be careful not to burn kalonji when you toast it, as it will get very bitter very quickly.

**KOJI** Miso, mirin, sake, rice vinegar, soy sauce, shochu (a vodka-like distilled liquor), amazake, and Chinese fermented black beans all have a lot in common. These workhorses of Asian cuisine all start with the same mold spores, *Aspergillus oryzae*, better known as koji. Koji is the name of both the mold (seed koji) and the ingredient (koji rice) used for cooking and pickling, which is rice coated with the active mold spores. Look for it in Asian markets, online, or in health food stores.

**KOMBU** This thick-cut sea vegetable is frequently used in Japanese cooking, particularly to flavor bonito stock and soups. Some add it to pots of beans to help the beans become tender faster. Rarely is it in the center spotlight as it is in the recipe for Preserved Seaweed. It is sold in dried sheets, and can be found in Japanese markets and health food stores.

**KOREAN CHILE FLAKES** We tend to think of chile powder as something measured by the teaspoon, sold in tiny spice bottles. In Korean cuisine, chile pepper is often measured by the cupful; gochugaru (flakes of sun-dried red chile) is sold in giant sacks. Don't confuse this with gochujangyong gochugaru (Korean chile powder), which is essentially the same stuff, but ground much finer. (You can use the finer powder, but since it's denser, it will make your food that much hotter.) I always hate to send home cooks out seeking very specific ingredients unless it's entirely necessary, but trust me: there is no substitute. Cayenne and crushed dried red chile just aren't the same. Gochugaru is sold in different levels of heat from mild to very hot. I used a midrange heat for the recipes in this book (though I much prefer it sizzling!). Korean markets have a wide selection of this vital ingredient, with a wide range of prices, and you often get what you pay for. Look for a nice red color, and a product from Korea (not China).

**LEMONGRASS** Lemongrass adds a citrus note to Thai and Vietnamese soups, curries, stews—and pickles. It comes in fibrous, foot-long stalks, which can be found in the produce section of most Asian markets. To prepare lemongrass for cooking, chop off about an inch from the bottom of the stalk and all of the tough tops of the leaves (usually more than half the length at the top), then peel away the outer leaves. The only piece of the lemongrass tender enough to chew is a white, pale, very skinny inner heart, and this is what we'll use for our pickles. If you can't stand to just discard all those outer stems and leaves, they do boil up into a nice tea, and when bruised a bit and tied into a knot, they add their flavor to soup or stock.

**MACADAMIA NUTS** Despite the marketing genius of Hawaiian macadamia growers, these nuts are actually native to Australia, and are also grown domestically in California. In this book, I substitute them for candlenuts, a common thickening agent for soups and curries—and pickle brines—in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia. I have never been able to find candlenuts in or around San Francisco, but aromatic fresh, unsalted macadamias have a similar flavor and oil-rich texture. Beware of rancid nuts in bulk bins; it's best to buy them sealed.

**MANGO** Most of us are not fortunate enough to live in a climate where mangos grow in a multitude of varieties—and there are dozens. For example, here in Northern California, it's difficult to track down more than just two types: the small, orange-yellow Manila mangos, and the large green-, red-, and orange-skinned Tommy Atkins, which is the mango cultivar most commonly found in North America (and the kind I used when writing these recipes). And there's one other mango decision to make: ripe or green. While ripe mangos are delicious for eating, if they're too ripe they will turn your pickles to mush. When cooking with ripe mango, select fruit that are more red and orange than green on the outside, and not soft but just yielding to the touch. Green, unripened mangos, such as those used in the Green Mango Pickle are just that: mostly green all over, and hard to the touch.

**MIRIN** A very common sauce and flavoring agent, mirin is a sweet fermented rice wine. Some varieties are designed for drinking, but the cooking variety of mirin, sold amid condiments and not with the booze, has very little alcohol —less than 1 percent. Cooking mirin is most often used in conjunction with soy sauce to add sweetness to dishes; it's also commonly used to season fish. Aji-mirin is mirin with a little added salt; it's okay to use them interchangeably in a recipe, but be sure to adjust your salt accordingly. If you're out of mirin, you can substitute sake (or even dry sherry) with sugar added at a ratio of roughly 3:1 by volume.

**MISO** Many Japanese dishes, including soups, stews, and marinades, use miso. It's a thick, fermented paste made from soybeans (and/or barley), koji rice, and salt. Depending on the variety of miso (white, yellow, or red), the paste is fermented for weeks, months, or years. It lends a tangy, salty flavor to food, making it a perfect medium for pickles. When shopping for miso, buy it from the refrigerated section. Look for organic, and also for a short ingredient list containing only what's mentioned above.

**MURABBA** This North Indian preserve is a lovely twist on boring bottled fruit. Fruits and/or vegetables are left whole or in large pieces and either boiled in heavy syrup or bubbled into a spoonable sweet sauce, and the flavor is enhanced with just a wink of cardamom, lemon, saffron, or rose water. Indian gooseberries are the most common fruit seen in a murabba, but I've also seen

it with carrots, dates, raisins, mango, and even white potato. Traditionally, just a tiny dish is served to sweeten the mouth of an unexpected guest (it's traditional to offer visitors something sweet to eat upon arrival), but Sweet Red Pepper Murabba is also delicious anytime atop ice cream or pancakes.

**MUSTARD** When North Americans think mustard, they most likely picture that classic yellow stripe streaked across a hot dog; that condiment is properly called prepared mustard. For picklers, the most frequently used form of mustard is the seeds—most commonly yellow or brown, but in Indian cuisine, one also finds white and black seeds. For any sort of pickling, mustard seeds add visual interest and texture, but also a pungency that balances a pickle's punch.

**MUSTARD OIL** One sniff of this yellow-hued oil, found almost exclusively in Indian grocery stores (and online), and you'll get what the Indian food you've been making at home has been missing. This essential oil of the mustard seed has a very distinctive flavor, reminiscent of cauliflower, turnips, and cabbage, the plant family to which it belongs. Though it's primarily used as a cooking oil in North Indian cuisine, it's used here, heated at low temperatures, to add flavor and richness to pickles and chutneys. It's deemed unsuitable for human consumption in North America and the European Union because of its high concentration of erucic acid; technically, it is only approved for sale in the United States as a massage oil. Do with this knowledge what you will.

**PAPAYA** Though it's eaten like a fruit when it's ripe and soft, papaya when it's green and firm pickles like a champ. Look for firm, unblemished, heavy, green fruits in the produce section of nearly any Asian market. Note that green papaya and ripe papaya are not interchangeable. In the south of China, the warm, moist climate is perfect for growing tropical fruits like this one, which is then used in pickles and jams. However, its best-known use may be in Thai shredded green papaya salad. It takes to acid and sweetness really nicely in any form.

**PEANUT OIL** Guess what is made from peanuts and is greatly beloved in Chinese cuisine? *This guy*! Highly refined, it has a smoke point of around 450°F, so it can tolerate really hot woks, and it has a lengthy shelf life to

boot. It can be found in most supermarkets and, of course, in Chinese markets. Unrefined and cold-pressed peanut oils can be found in health food stores and are said to be healthier choices (because they're less processed)—but they're more expensive, their smoke point is not quite as high, and they're not as shelf stable. The more difficult to find roasted peanut oil is more akin to black sesame oil, and it should not be used for cooking but only for seasoning.

**RADISHES** When we talk about radishes in the Asian realm, we don't mean itsy-bitsy pink salad radishes (you know, the kind that 1950s housewives cut into rosettes). For Chinese pickling purposes, look for big, white, mild-tasting radishes like daikon or bachelor radish (also called ponytail radish). Daikon is available in many supermarkets as well as Asian markets. Feel free to also experiment with black radishes, watermelon radishes, or small Tokyo turnips, all of which are becoming increasingly more available in the winter months.

**RICE BRAN** White rice is a staple food of Japanese cooking; to make it white, the outer husk of the rice grains—the bran—is removed during processing. This by-product has a few culinary uses, but its most common application (in Japan, anyway, where it's called nuka) is pickling (see Rice Bran Pickles).

Nuka is usually sold dried in airtight bags on the shelf. However, sometimes fresh rice bran can be found in the refrigerated section of Japanese markets or health food stores. When working with the fresh stuff, you will need less water than you will with the dried. Also, while fresh nuka often yields better flavor, I've found it spoils more easily.

**SEA SALT** Salt is absolutely critical in Korean pickling; it's as important as the vegetables themselves. I advocate using sea salt because of its clean flavor, but also because of its ability to keep vegetables crunchy when they come into contact with an abundance of liquid over time. In my experience, other salts don't accomplish this task as well as sea salt. Many of these recipes call for fine sea salt for two reasons: sea salt yields a nice crunchy vegetable and a good flavor (and it's quite traditional); and fine sea salt (as opposed to flaky sea salt, which is actually the most popular salt in Korean pickling) will yield the same measurement in your kitchen as it does in mine. All flaky salts, though I love them dearly, will yield a different measure based on the brand, and each brand is a little bit different in crystal size and overall saltiness. For that reason, though sacks of flaky sea salt can be had cheaply in Korean markets, I've called for Maldon in the few recipes that I felt really needed flaky sea salt—it's uniform and widely available, and its flavor is lovely. It's an expensive choice, but the results you get in your kitchen will be the same as those I got in mine. Please note that in these recipes, kosher salt (of which I am usually a big fan) and table salt (shudder) are not one-to-one substitutes.

**SESAME SEEDS** These minuscule white (hulled) and black (unhulled) seeds are used extensively in Middle Eastern and African cooking as well as in East Asian cooking, and they are extremely versatile. For our purposes, sesame seeds add a nice bit of visual interest, crunch, and texture to a pickle bowl. White sesame and black sesame are somewhat interchangeable as a garnish, though in addition to their color difference, the white seeds tend to be softer and a bit sweeter (which is why they're the ones you'd want for sesame butter or sesame desserts like halvah). Both, however, benefit tremendously from being freshly toasted before serving; toast in a dry skillet over medium-high heat for 2 to 3 minutes, until fragrant. If you go much longer than that, some of them will dance right out of the pan!

**SHAOXING WINE** This fermented Chinese rice wine is used as both a beverage and an ingredient; it's also the critical ingredient in any dish described as "drunken." Shaoxing wine can vary quite widely in quality, and the stuff found in Asian markets on this side of the Pacific is usually Shaoxing cooking wine—which, like cooking sherry, contains salt, sugar, and other additives, making it just barely passable for cooking and absolutely terrible for drinking. Since Shaoxing wine of drinking quality can be difficult to find, I recommend using a good dry sherry (again, not cooking sherry) or, even more widely available, some good gin in its stead. Despite the fact that it's also a rice wine, Japanese sake varies quite a bit in quality and flavor, and it's not a good substitute for Shaoxing wine in pickles.

**SHISO** I am bonkers for fresh shiso, so much so that the measly quantities I found at the store were no longer cutting it, and I had to start growing my own. Imagine a cross between basil, anise, thyme, and stone fruit all at once. Yeah, it's that good. The green variety of this pretty little culinary herb often shows up on sushi plates, but the red variety is equally delicious and is a frequent additive to umeboshi, to which it lends its telltale red color. Put it in salads, pickle it, cure it in salt, douse it in vinegar (see Pickled Shiso Leaves and Shiso Vinegar)—it's all good. Shiso leaf has a number of common names, including beefsteak plant, ooba, and perilla; its scientific moniker is *Perilla frutescens*. A note on salted shiso leaves: they are usually found vacuum-sealed on the shelf in Japanese grocery stores.

**SICHUAN PEPPERCORN** This floral-tasting, clovelike spice is akin to nothing else, and when used in abundance, it also creates a pleasant mouth-numbing sensation. Unlike chile peppers or black peppercorns, Sichuan pepper is not spicy-hot at all, but a little goes a long way in a canning jar. There is no suitable substitute for Sichuan pepper. If you can't find it near you, it's easy to obtain online.

**SOY SAUCE** Although it is not purely authentic, for the sake of uniformity and availability, I have used Kikkoman soy sauce for all of the recipes present (it's from a Japanese company, but made in America). That said, if you're fortunate enough to live in a community with some diverse grocery stores of the Asian continent, feel free to look for the following to make your pickles

shine. There are mainly two types of Korean soy sauce—jin ganjang, which is an average, medium-bodied soy sauce, and guk ganjang, which is lighter and often used to flavor soups. Go for the jin ganjang for all of your pickle-making needs. For the pickles of China, if you can easily obtain light (sometimes labeled “thin”) Chinese soy sauce, by all means do so; Pearl River is a solid brand. Be sure to stay clear of any soy sauce labeled “dark” or “thick” for our pickling purposes; these are better used in soups, stews, and stocks. And if you’re gluten-intolerant, tamari is a fine substitute anywhere soy sauce is called for.

**SWEET RICE FLOUR** Also known as glutinous rice flour, sweet rice flour is a very popular thickening agent; it’s great for adding body to soups, stews, and sauces (and you can use it to make mochi at home—yum!). For those of you who care, it’s gluten free (the word *glutinous* can be confusing that way). It’s simply the short-grained sticky rice that’s a staple in many Asian cuisines, ground up into a velvety powder—so it’s not the same thing as plain rice flour. The most popular brand is Mochiko, which is sold in a small white box with a blue star.

**TAMARIND** Tamarind lends its tangy, sour, and sweet flavor to a host of Latin American and Asian dishes and beverages, as well as being the backbone of British condiments like Worcestershire sauce and Branston Pickle. Finding fresh, ripe tamarind pods can be tricky, but pressed square cakes of the paste (most often with its seeds) are available online and in Latin American and Asian grocery stores. To use tamarind paste in its pressed form, simply hack a chunk off the cake and let it soften for about 10 minutes in boiling water just to cover; it will then be malleable enough to mash into paste. Use your hand for this job to more easily and thoroughly remove the skins and seeds. Easier to work with is tamarind paste concentrate, a ready-to-use spoonable version that does not require soaking. However, take caution, as many brands are rife with chemical preservatives. Only use the concentrate form if you can find one that's just tamarind and water (salt is okay, too, but be sure to adjust any other salt in the recipe accordingly). With the concentrate, no soaking is required; just measure and use.

**TURMERIC** When dried and ground to a fine yellow powder, turmeric is best used in small amounts for its color—too much can result in more of its bitter flavor than most dishes can bear. Fresh turmeric is a wonderful thing if you can find it at your local grocery or Asian market; use about 1 inch of the fresh root for every ½ teaspoon of ground turmeric. It is sold near the fresh ginger in the produce section—like ginger, it is a rhizome. It will keep for several weeks in the vegetable drawer, provided it's kept dry. Note that any turmeric, particularly the fresh stuff, is extremely staining, so take caution for your favorite apron but go nuts when you want to dye Easter eggs. To peel turmeric, use a simple teaspoon instead of a standard vegetable peeler.

**UME** Ume (*Prunus mume*) is a fruit known as Japanese plum, but it's actually more closely related to apricots. The trees grow widely in Japan and produce a beautiful flower. Ume can be tough to find in the States, but they are available in Japanese markets in June. In addtion to being used for umeboshi, they are popularly transformed into umeshu, a sweet, light liquor. The plum can't be eaten raw, but when cured into pickles or booze it has a pleasant, fruity bite.

**UMEBOSHI** When ume are layered in salt and left to ferment for several weeks, they become umeboshi; given their unique puckery and salty flavor, many people call them salt plums or pickled plums. Umeboshi are often eaten with white rice (the plum is supposed to look like the red sun on the white Japanese flag), and they are said to be very good for digestion and for relieving headaches.

**UMEZU** The salty brine that forms when salt pulls out the liquid from ume during the making of umeboshi is called umezu, and it's a delicious and salty seasoning that's a great addition to some tsukemono and to other dishes. Umezu can be white or red; both have the plum flavor, while the red variety has the added color of red shiso leaf. Umezu can be homemade, as a by-product of making umeboshi, or purchased.

**VINEGAR** In the Philippines there are coconut vinegar, in China there are a variety of red vinegars, and in Japan rice vinegar predominates. While we do sometimes turn to the latter for a light dose of acidity in the pickling realm, for the most part, in particular for the pickles of Southeast Asia, we stick with the universal classic: good ol' distilled white vinegar. Chinese white rice vinegar can have an acidity that's too low for pickling—I've seen bottles labeled at 3 percent, which makes it even less acidic than the more commonly found Japanese rice vinegar, which typically hovers around 5 percent. Chinese black rice vinegar and red rice vinegar are commonly used in Chinese cooking, but the flavors and acidities vary wildly, and many of them taste a lot like balsamic vinegar—again, not a great choice for pickles. Reserve these specialty vinegars for soups, stews, and dipping sauces.

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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